

GUY
HAMMERSLEY
MATTHEW WHITE JR

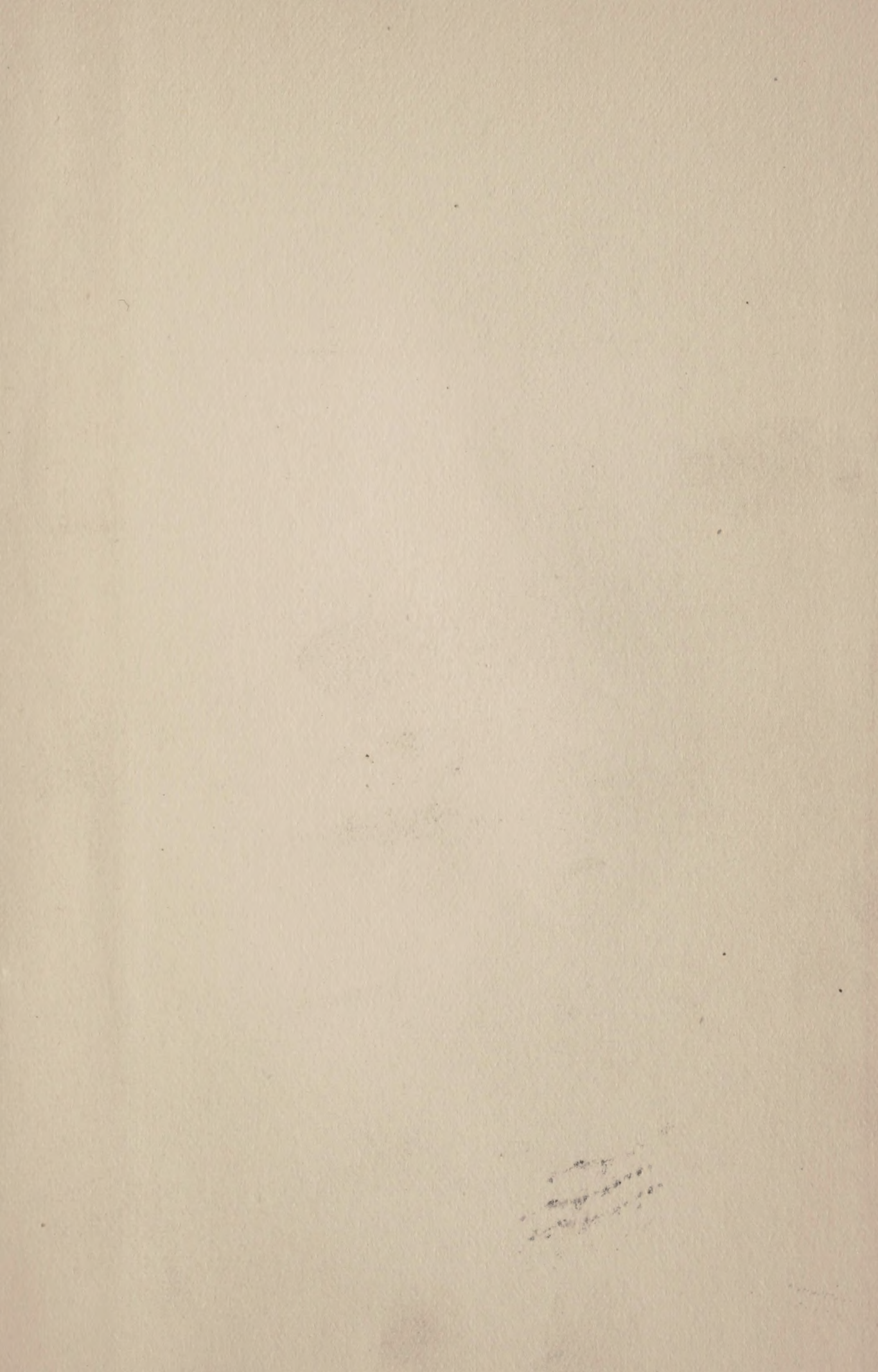


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GUY HAMMERSLEY

GUY HAMMERSLEY

OR

CLEARING HIS NAME

BY

MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

AUTHOR OF

"MY MYSTERIOUS FORTUNE," "TOUR OF A PRIVATE CAR," ETC.



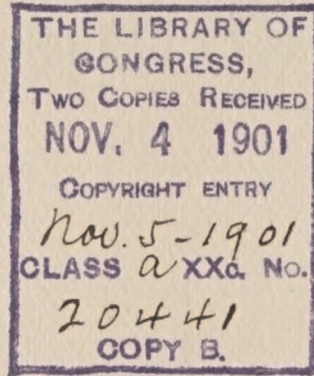
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GUY HAMMERSLEY.

CHAPTER I.

THEN AND NOW.

It was one o'clock, the busiest hour of the day in Fox & Burdell's restaurant. On each side of the long lunch room and at two smaller counters running down the center, business men were perched on stools; ramming, cramming, jamming—no other terms will express the process—their midday meal home as if they were loading a gun to fire at game which might at any moment take to flight.

"Guy Hammersley! Is it really you?"

A tall young fellow in a cape overcoat, who was crossing the room towards a vacant stool of which he had just caught sight, halted abruptly as though a live electric wire had suddenly sprung across his path. He held out his hand to a youth of his own age, who had acted as the live wire, and who was an employee of the restaurant.

Both his hands were occupied in removing the dishes from before a gentleman seated at one of the

middle counters, and he started so when he heard his name mentioned that he almost dropped them with a crash to the floor.

"Arlington!" he exclaimed in a low voice, and managed to set the dishes safely down on the counter again and take his friend's hand.

Then, speaking to a colored waiter who came up, he said: "Pumpkin pie for this gentleman," and turned once more to his friend.

"Great Scott, Hammersley, what under the sun are you doing here?"

"Talking to you, just at the present minute," laughed the other; then, suddenly becoming serious, he added: "So you haven't heard?"

"No, I've heard nothing. For Heaven's sake, Guy, old fellow, tell me what has brought you to this?"

"The Gotham Bank. You must have read of its disgraceful failure, brought about by the old story of an unfaithful cashier?"

"Yes, I read a brief account of it in the *American Register* when I was in Paris. Did you bank there?"

"Yes, and mother lost everything. She's giving singing lessons now in the Manhattan School of Music. I couldn't sit down and be supported by a woman, so I walked the city from end to end trying to find something to do. But we know very few here in New York, and mother could not go back to Cincinnati, nor did she want me to go away from her; so when Mr. Burdell, a member of Dr. Pendleton's congregation, where we attend, offered me a

place in the restaurant at seven dollars a week, I decided that I ought to accept it."

"How long have you been here?" asked the other, his eyes fixed on the refined, handsome face of his friend, and wondering how he brought himself to endure his present surrounding, with the constant clatter of dishes, the cries of "Irish stew! One fry! Mug of Bass!" etc., and the associations into which it must bring him.

"A month, and it is not as bad you imagine. I'm not really a waiter, you see; only I'm supposed to look after things at this counter and help when necessary. At half-past two, when the cashier eats his lunch, and after I've had mine, I receive the checks and make change at the desk; so you see my position is a responsible one, in a certain sense, after all."

At this moment a waiter near by called out, "Glass o' cider," and, hastily excusing himself to his friend, Guy went off to fill the order, blissfully unconscious of the fact that he had lost Fox & Burdell a customer for that day at least.

During the time spent in his chat with Hammersley, the stool on which Arlington had had his eye was taken, and he had no mind to eat his lunch where he could see his friend running about, waiting on this horde of hungry business men. With a hasty "Good-bye, Guy, I won't detain you longer, and I honor you for your independence," he left the restaurant, and for some distance sauntered along, scarcely conscious of whither he was going.

It all seemed so inexplicable; Guy Hammersley,

handsome, dashing Guy, the "head boy" of Fairlock Hall, whose pockets were always full of cash ever ready to be spent most generously for his friends, and for whom the master had always predicted a brilliant future—to see this same fellow now, after only six months, with a napkin under his arm in a down-town restaurant !

Arlington emphasized the down-town in his reflections. If he had encountered Guy at Delmonico's or the Brunswick, he might have been less shocked, for he had often read of impoverished counts and dukes who had donned the waiter's jacket at these cafés.

"But I do respect him for it," the noble fellow murmured to himself, "and I'm going to show him some attention to prove it. I wish I'd left him my address and asked him to call. But never mind. I'll step in again next time I'm down-town."

Meanwhile Guy was bustling from one end to the other of the lunch room, wiping off counters with his napkin wherever he saw it necessary, supplying customers with bills of fare, and filling all orders for liquids.

"But while he worked hard and faithfully with hands and feet, his mind was far away from this noisy babel, intently dwelling on a great, vine-covered mansion, set down amid spreading lawns, smoothly shaven, and shaded by grand old trees, underneath which he had lain many a day, eating nuts and chatting with the friend who had just left him.

And a great portion of this talk was devoted to the future that lay before each of them, as bright for one, it seemed then, as for the other. They were both to

enter college in the fall, Guy to wear the crimson of Harvard, and Bert Arlington the blue of Yale. And what a glorious time they were going to have of it, and how each meant to distinguish himself, not only in certain branches of study, but in the world of boating and football !

They were both Western fellows, Guy coming from Cincinnati and Bert from Chicago. Fairlock Hall, where they had met, was in Connecticut, and here Guy had spent four very happy years, the only drawback to his complete contentment being the separation from his mother. But he went home for the Christmas holidays, and at Easter she always came on and took rooms at the Windsor in New York, when Guy went down and stayed with her during his vacation.

His father Guy had never seen, he having died before the son's birth. He had left his family a very comfortable fortune, all of which Mrs. Hammersley, by the advice of a friend, had invested in stock of the new Gotham Bank, of New York.

As the family was so small, and a great deal of her time was spent in traveling, she did not keep house, but lived in a handsome suite of apartments at one of the Queen City's hotels, where Guy, when he was home, was enabled to entertain his friends most sumptuously. But on her son's installation at Harvard, Mrs. Hammersley proposed removing to Boston, so that they could be together, and meanwhile they were to pass the summer at Saratoga.

She had attended the commencement exercises at Fairlock, and Guy had accompanied her back to

New York, when the crash came. It was so sudden and so awful, falling on them when they were so far from their old-time friends.

But after the first shock had passed, Mrs. Hammersley decided that it was better so. She could never bring herself to be dependent upon others, even her closest friends, and it would be far easier for her to make her own way among strangers.

She and Guy removed at once to a quiet boarding-house, and with the little that was left them from the wreck of their fortune lived through the hot summer days, each looking for something to do.

Most of the few friends that Mrs. Hammersley had in New York were out of town, so that the quest both in her own case and Guy's was a doubly difficult one, and it was chance at last that finally crowned it with success for each of them.

One afternoon late in August she met Dr. Pendleton on the Elevated Road. She had had a letter of introduction to him from friends in the West, and attended his church whenever she was in New York. He learned her story, and, knowing of the fine voice she possessed, arranged to have her sing the following Sunday in his choir, and by this means succeeded in securing her a position on the staff of teachers at the Manhattan School of Music, of which a friend of his was director.

The sight of the chum of the old days, albeit these were only six months before, brought all these things back to Guy's mind with the vivid force of contrast, and most of his work that afternoon was done mechanically. He did not tell his mother about the

meeting with Arlington. He feared it would only pain her to think that it might have pained *him*.

The next day he had just got his department in order for the business rush when Mr. Fox came up to him and said : " Hammersley, I want you to go out on an errand for me."

This was something new, but Guy quietly took his hat and coat and awaited further orders.

CHAPTER II.

SUMMONED HOME.

"HAMMERSLEY," said Mr. Fox, when Guy presented himself in his private office for orders, "I want you to take this package for me around to the office of the *Fireside Favorite*, in Murray street. It is a view of our establishment to be used in the magazine as an advertisement, and all you need do is to leave it for the manager of the advertising department. You will see his room as soon as you enter. There is no answer, and hurry back as quickly as you can. It is but a step from here."

Glad of the opportunity for even this brief outing—for of course it was not necessary for him to go out to lunch—Guy took the little package and hastened off. He was by this time quite at home in the downtown localities and had no difficulty in finding the number in Murray street to which Mr. Fox had directed him. A sign in the doorway apprised him of the fact that the offices of the *Fireside Favorite* were situated on the top floor; and when he arrived here, he found himself in a low, broad room, with paper-bound books piled up in every direction, two offices partitioned off on one side, and not a single person visible.

Guy cleared his throat once or twice, but nobody appeared. It was noontime, and the girls who wrote wrappers and did up books for mailing were evidently in some back room eating their lunch. To his left was a small gate, giving access behind the counter, and which now stood half open. Just behind it were two private offices, on the door of one of which appeared the words—

ADVERTISING MANAGER.

Inside Guy could see a roll top desk, the lid down, and gathering from this that the man to whom he had been sent was not in the building, he decided that rather than lose any more time he had better step inside, leave the package on the desk, and return to the restaurant.

Acting on this idea, within three minutes he had executed his commission and was on his way back to Fox & Burdell's.

"Funny way of letting an office take care of itself," he soliloquized, as he walked along. "Lucky my business didn't require an answer."

He was just passing the foot of the stairway leading to the Park Place station of the Elevated Road, when he heard his name called by some one half way down.

"Mr. Hammersley! Mr. Guy!"

It was a woman's voice, and looking up he saw Eliza, the waitress at their boarding house home, hurrying down to head him off. Her manner was excited, and Guy's heart almost stopped its throbbing

for an instant as his thoughts flew at once to his mother.

"What is it?" he cried, running part way up the stairway to meet the girl. "Mother sent you to——"

"Lor', Mr. Guy," was the response, "she ain't able to speak, and Miss Stanwix thought I'd better come down and get you."

"For Heaven's sake tell me what has happened!" demanded Guy, his vivid fancy picturing a hundred dreadful possibilities.

"You'll come right back with me, won't you?" went on the girl, as they reached the sidewalk.

"Yes, of course," and Guy led the way to the up-town stairway without a thought of Fox & Burdell. Some evil had befallen his mother, and there was no room in his mind for anything else just then.

"Now what is it, Eliza?" he repeated, when he had dropped two tickets in the box, and they were pacing the platform waiting for a train.

"It was an express wagon, sorr, belongin' to Tim O'Shea, who does kape the little office around the corner. Yer ma was crossin' the strate, agoin' to get on the car, whin Tim's bhiy Tom came drivin' along, gapin' at a big theayter poster, the galoot, and his horse knocked your ma down, and her beautiful plush cloak do be that covered with dust an' dirt as brings tears to your eyes to look at it."

"But mother herself," interrupted Guy, impatiently. "Never mind the cloak. Tell me, was she much hurt?"

"Well, as I was tellin' ye, sorr, she was spachless

but there wasn't no blood. A tall gentleman, with gold-rimmed eyeglasses, picked her up and carried her from the corner clear to the house and upstairs. Oh, but he must be a strong man to do that same, and then I came right away down for you. Miss Stanwix was afeard, sorr, a telegram would scare ye too much."

"As if you hadn't scared me about as much as possible," reflected Guy, as they boarded the train.

He tried his best during the trip up town to find out where his mother was injured, but without avail. Excitable Eliza would deal in nothing but generalities and exclamations, so that when they arrived at the house in Forty-Fifth Street poor Guy was wrought up to a fearful state of agitation.

His mother occupied a large room on the third floor back, while he had the small one adjoining, a folding bed being in each. Hurrying up the stairs, two steps at a time, he pushed open the door of his mother's apartment and was immediately confronted by the apparition of a tall man, wearing gold-rimmed eyeglasses, a much waxed mustache, and who held a finger laid across his lips, from which a soft "ssh" issued.

"I am her son. Let me see my mother," implored Guy, in a low tone.

"Oh yes," said the tall gentleman with a pompous air which quite confirmed the impression Guy had already received of him, "but quietly, very quietly. She has had a very severe shock, and the least commotion may throw her back. The doctor is now making his examination."

While speaking the stranger had made his way out of the larger apartment, drawing the door to behind him, thus forcing Guy back into his own little room.

"But I ought to see her. I am her son, the only relative she has here," and the boy made a motion as if to dodge past the other.

But the latter laid a much beringed hand on his shoulder, and putting off a good deal of his pomposity, said conciliatingly; "I know just how you must feel, my boy, to be held back in this way by one who is a perfect stranger to you. But the doctor charged me to admit no one till he summoned me. Believe me it is for your mother's good."

Considerably appeased by the good sense of these remarks, Guy stepped back into the mite of an apartment which was all he could call his, and sank down on a chair, his eyes riveted on his companion with a gaze that said almost as plainly as words: "Who are you?"

He of the eyeglasses evidently so interpreted it, for bending down his head he began in a solemn undertone: "I was so fortunate as to be directly behind your mother when the accident happened. I tried to warn her by shouting, but was just too late. Then I sprang forward and dragged her out from under the horse's feet."

"Then you can tell me, sir, how badly she is hurt," Guy burst forth, rising from his seat.

"Oh, I trust not seriously. She was very much dazed, of course, and could not speak. I carried her home here."

"But—but if she could not speak, how did you know where my mother lived?" Guy lifted his head hastily to inquire.

"That will involve a little explanation," was the answer as the other took a seat. Then he continued: "You must know that I live just across the street, and hence, as I am at home a good deal of the time through the day during the summer months, could not fail to notice your mother and yourself as you passed in and out. Thus I had no difficulty in knowing where the lady I had rescued belonged."

The use of the word "rescue" impressed Guy with the conviction that he had been lacking in the display of a proper sense of recognition for the services the stranger had rendered. Therefore he now stammered: "I am sure I am deeply grateful to you, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Colonel Starr. I forgot to tell you that on arriving here and ascertaining from Miss Stanwix, whom I know, that your mother had no regular physician, I took the liberty of stepping down the block and calling in mine, Dr. Chusdie, a man of superior skill and far-reaching repute. But there, I hear him calling. We can go in now."

His heart beating at double quick, Guy followed Colonel Starr out into the hall and into the darkened room where his mother lay on the lounge, Miss Stanwix bending over her with a bottle of smelling salts, while a short, chubby little man, smoothly shaven, was just putting on his overcoat.

Guy darted forward and knelt by his mother's side.

She looked just as usual, perhaps a trifle pale, and as Guy took her hand she opened her eyes and smiled—the faintest flicker of a smile.

“I am glad you are here, Guy,” she said, “so you can see for yourself that it is nothing so serious as it might have been. I was afraid they would frighten you.”

“And you are not in pain?” asked Guy, softly.

“No, my boy ; nothing is broken. It was only the shock. I shall be all right presently. Good-bye, doctor. You have my name I believe—Mrs. Hammersley.”

Taking this for a dismissal, the physician withdrew, but Colonel Starr still remained.

CHAPTER III.

AN ASTOUNDING CHARGE.

As soon as the doctor had departed, Colonel Starr, who had been conferring aside with Miss Stanwix, came forward.

"I trust, madam," he began, addressing himself to Mrs. Hammersley, "that you will pardon my intrusion, but I can only excuse it by saying that I could not go on my way until I had learned that you had suffered no serious consequences from your dreadful experience. I wish you a very good morning," and he bowed himself out.

Miss Stanwix withdrew immediately after, and mother and son were left together. Then Mrs. Hammersley broke down, simply from a revulsion of feeling.

Looking up in her son's face through her tears she murmured: "When I felt myself going and saw that horse over me, not one thought did I give to myself, but all to you, Guy! 'What will become of him if anything happens to me?' was my inward cry, and then to find that I have escaped; that I can still work for you. Ah, Heaven is merciful; and I am afraid none of us sufficiently appreciate our

blessings till we see that they are in danger of being taken from us."

Now although Guy loved his mother with all his heart and soul, it always pained him deeply to hear her speak in this way of laboring for him. He knew that she did it out of pure affection, as the work she had undertaken was indeed a labor of love, wrought in the consciousness that he would benefit by it. But at the same time, as any high-spirited boy can easily conceive for himself, Guy wished with all his heart that it were otherwise.

So now he tried to divert her thoughts from himself by inquiring more particularly into the details of the accident, and thus he came naturally to the query that had all along been uppermost in his mind.

"Who is this Colonel Starr, mother?"

"Ah, you noticed it, too, did you, Guy?" she broke in quickly. "There is something odd about him. But I dislike to speak about it even to you. I cannot but realize that he saved my life and I try to feel the proper sense of gratitude."

At this point there was a knock at the door. It was Eliza, evidently as much excited as she had been when bound on her errand to the restaurant.

"Oh, Mr. Guy," she exclaimed, "there's a gentleman down in the parlor all red in the face and says he must see you right away."

This summons brought back to the boy like a flash the recollection that he had come off without reporting to Mr. Fox.

"I don't wonder they're cut up about it," he said to himself as, with his overcoat still on, he hurried

downstairs. "But they'll understand it all as soon as I tell them about mother."

He found no less a person than Mr. Fox himself in the parlor, not sitting down, but pacing back and forth on the rug that lay in the doorway. As soon as he caught sight of Guy, he faced him almost fiercely.

"Ah, sir," he exclaimed, "you are going to brazen it out, are you? I did not expect to find you here, but was determined to come and investigate for myself."

Guy looked bewildered. What did the man mean by the word "brazen"? Surely a mere absence from the restaurant of little more than an hour ought not to call for such a term, and to cause a member of the firm to come himself clear up town to see about it! It was inexplicable.

"I am very sorry," Guy began. "I was so shocked that I never once thought of going back to the restaurant to——" Mr. Fox waved his hand for silence and broke out:

"Shocked!" he exclaimed in a voice which Guy knew only too well must be distinctly audible to the servant who was setting the lunch table in the dining-room. "Why, boy, you must be out of your head to think you can blind me by such pretense of innocence. You are not a child and must be fully sensible of the enormity of the crime you have committed."

"Crime!"

Guy looked completely mystified. Was it then a crime to leave one's employer's office and go home

without first asking permission? A mistake, and a serious one, it might be, but, as has been said, Guy felt that he had the best of all excuses. But as yet, he had had no opportunity to give it.

Mr. Fox was wrought up to a terrible state of wrath. Guy had never seen him angry before, and could not but feel that his must be one of those natures that rarely allow their passion to rise, and for that reason, give freer rein to it when it does obtain the mastery.

"Crime?" he repeated now after Guy. "If stealing thirteen dollars isn't a crime I shall have to go to school and study the English language over again."

"Stealing thirteen dollars!" Again Guy could only echo the other's words, but this time through lips that grew white and trembled slightly.

"Come now, Hammersley," went on Mr Fox, seating himself on the piano stool, "what is the use of putting on such an air of surprise? I've done already more for you than I would for any other boy in my employ, on account of Dr. Pendleton. And if you will own up and restore the thirteen dollars, I will arrange with Mr. Inwood not to say a word about the affair outside, although of course I could no longer retain you in my place. But I can allow it to be supposed that you left of your own accord. All I ask now, you see, is restitution and confession."

Guy was still so dazed that he could scarcely articulate.

"I don't in the least understand what you mean, Mr. Fox," he replied, slowly, and looking his employer

straight in the eye. "I haven't had charge of the desk since three o'clock yesterday afternoon, and if the money was not missed till this morning——"

Mr. Fox bounced off the piano stool with a return of his anger.

"This is too much!" he exclaimed. "I took the trouble to leave my business and come all the way up here to try and make things as easy as possible for you, and you still persist in keeping your air of injured innocence. But you must come along with me. We'll see whether you will not break when you find yourself confronted with Mr. Inwood and the policeman he'll have on hand."

Guy began to realize now that some terrible mistake must have been made.

"Won't you explain more clearly, Mr. Fox?" he said. "Who is Mr. Inwood and when did this theft take place?"

This question was almost too much for the restaurant proprietor. Convinced as he was that Guy was guilty of the crime charged against him, it seemed the height of impudence for the boy to inquire about particulars on which he was presumably better informed than anybody else. But by a great effort Mr. Fox stifled his wrath, and adjusting his voice to a dry, harsh, measured tone, replied:

"Simply to recall the facts to your memory, I will say that at noon I sent you round to the office of the *Fireside Favorite* with a package. You left the package, for Mr. Inwood, the advertising manager, found it on his desk, but you took away a roll of bills, amounting to thirteen dollars, which had just been paid him,

and which he had left in his desk through oversight on going out to lunch with a friend. When he came back the roll was missing. He questioned his employees, and ascertained from them that no one had admitted anybody during his absence. But the cut from our establishment was there, and naturally Mr. Inwood at once came around to me to find out who had brought it."

Guy saw it all now, comprehended how his eagerness to execute his errand with dispatch had resulted in coiling about him a web of circumstantial evidence from which he would find it difficult to escape.

"This is horrible, Mr. Fox," he said, now in his turn pacing up and down the floor in nervous helplessness. "I never took that money, had no earthly idea it was there, as how should I have? Finding nobody came, and seeing the room open where the package belonged, I simply walked in, left it and came away. The reason I did not return at once to the restaurant was because I met a messenger from home who informed me that mother had been injured in an accident. Naturally I was very much alarmed and came up here at once. As for the robbery, the evidence against me, you must see, is purely circumstantial. Why cannot some one of Mr. Inwood's clerks have taken the money as well as I?"

"And what would that be but convicting them on circumstantial evidence too?" Mr. Fox put in quickly. "Besides, Mr. Inwood has perfect confidence in them all. They have had numberless opportunities to steal much greater amounts, and nothing was ever missed before. Of course I was greatly shocked and at first

would not believe it, but your protracted absence soon lent color to Mr. Inwood's suspicions, and then I determined to come up here and give you the chance I have already offered you. That you have refused, and justice must take its course."

CHAPTER IV.

CALLED TO ACCOUNT.

FOR an instant or two, while Mr. Fox was speaking, Guy tried to imagine that he was not himself living through this bitter experience, but was reading of it in a book. How could he bear it? He, a Hammersley, a name that, as far back as records went, had never been sullied by the least taint of disgrace!

And his mother! How could he tell her of this dreadful charge?

"Well, sir, are you ready to accompany me down to Mr. Inwood's? Of course, if you can prove to his satisfaction that you did not take the money, well and good."

Mr. Fox's voice broke in on Guy's meditations, as that gentleman rose and buttoned his coat.

"Yes, sir, in one minute;" and Guy stepped back to the dining-room to ask Eliza to tell his mother that he had gone down-town again. He did not dare trust himself to see her. Then he went out with Mr. Fox.

The fresh air seemed to inspire him with hope, in some way.

"It can't be possible," he told himself, "that in

these days of law and justice an innocent person can be sent to jail. Mr. Inwood must see that I didn't take the money."

They went directly to the office of the *Fireside Favorite*, Mr. Fox taking a paper out of his pocket and not speaking one word during the journey.

And with what different sensations Guy ascended those three flights of dirty stairs from the feelings that had dominated him in the same locality but two short hours ago!

Mr. Fox threw open the door labeled, "Office of the *Fireside Favorite*," and poor Guy felt the hot blood rush in surges to his cheeks as he found the room, deserted when he was there on that ill-fated errand, now filled with girls, who one and all ceased their work as he entered, and stared at him with cruel, relentless steadiness.

But the stare was not the only thing he had to face. A regular buzz of "Here he is," went round, and he even heard a skurrying of skirts as girls not so favorably placed for seeing hurried forward to get a sight of the messenger from Fox & Burdell's who had stolen thirteen dollars.

One remark he heard distinctly:

"Oh, Hattie, isn't he handsome!" one pale-faced worker on wrapping whispered to her seat mate.

Mr. Fox glanced neither to the right nor the left, but marched straight ahead to Mr. Inwood's private office. He took pains, too, that Guy should walk ahead of him.

Mr. Inwood saw them the instant they entered the outer room and twirled round in his revolving chair,

threw his head back and folded his arms, and thus awaited their arrival with the air of a supreme court judge. He was a very stout man, with an immense double chin, but, contrary to the rule that is supposed to hold good with most fat people, he did not look in the least jolly, or as if he ever could be so.

Before Guy and his conductor reached his apartment, which was cut off from the main store by a glass partition, a little man, very thin, and with an immense amount of jewelry about his person, stepped out of the adjoining room, ranged himself alongside of Mr. Inwood and put a pair of eyeglasses astride of his nose.

"That's Mr. Tretbar, I suppose, the head of the establishment," Guy reflected, the hopes that had served in a measure to brighten his trip down-town deserting him as he noted the sinister looks of the two men in whose hands his fate rested.

"Ah, good afternoon, Mr. Fox," exclaimed the little man, coming forward to shake hands very effusively. "I'm very glad to see you, er—I mean sorry that it should be brought about by such an inauspicious occasion. Take a seat, take a seat. So this is the young man. Um!"

Mr. Tretbar drew out the last exclamation to a lengthy guttural murmur, as if Guy had possessed the features and general appearance of a hardened criminal.

He did not request him to take a seat, but as soon as he had entered walked over to the door, closed it, and then stood with his back against it, as though to nip in the bud any attempt at escape.

"Yes, this is the young man," responded Mr. Fox, sinking into the seat and wiping out the inside band of his hat with his handkerchief; "and I regret to report that he utterly refuses to acknowledge the crime and restore the stolen property."

Guy could not stand by silent and listen to this. He took one step forward, and with his well-shaped head thrown back so that he looked his accusers full in the face, he said :

"Gentlemen, if I had taken that money, I dare say I should have been only too willing to have accepted the offer Mr. Fox made me. But I cannot perjure myself by confessing to a crime of which I am not guilty. Besides, I could not afford to expend thirteen dollars for such a purpose, even could I stoop to do such a thing. On the other hand, if I *had* taken the money, would I have been so short-sighted as to have stayed where hands could easily be laid upon me ?"

"You did not return to the restaurant," Mr. Fox here interposed; "and when I saw you at the house you had your overcoat on, so I imagine I got there just in time."

"I explained to you, Mr. Fox," Guy retorted, his face flushing at the unjust imputation, "why it was I did not at once report to you, and the reason I happened to have my overcoat on was because, hoping to get back to the restaurant very soon, I had not taken it off."

All this time Mr. Inwood had not spoken a word. Now, when there was a pause for an instant, he wheeled around in his chair so as to face Guy.

"You have had your say, sir," he began, "now permit me to have mine. You have proved, to your own satisfaction, that you did not take the money. Now, then, will you be good enough to prove to mine who did?"

"Some one who knows your habits much better than I do, sir," replied Guy, trying to speak, poor fellow, as respectfully as he could.

"Ah, that's manly, that's courageous, is it not?" here interrupted Mr. Tretbar. "To lay the blame on one of those poor girls outside who labor here from morning till night to support mothers and little sisters at home! Shame on you, young man, to seek to shelter your own crime behind a woman's skirts."

As Mr. Tretbar uttered the last sentence, he gesticulated freely and ended by laying the flat of his hand against his breast, while he shook his head mournfully from side to side.

"Come now, young man, doesn't that move you?" put in Mr. Inwood, as though the heart that could not be touched by his employer's eloquent plea for the working girl must be adamant indeed.

"I did not take the money," replied Guy, firmly.

"Well, Mr. Fox, I do not see how we can compromise matters while the young man remains in this frame of mind," began Mr. Inwood. Then turning to Guy, he added: "Will you step into the next room for a moment?"

He indicated the door on the right, leading into Mr. Tretbar's private office, and at the same time stepped to the door of his own apartment and called out "Hattie!"

The girl came forward and Mr. Inwood then directed her to wait in Mr. Tretbar's room.

Guy's ears tingled. He understood only too well that she had been summoned to watch him.

He walked over to the window, and leaning his burning forehead against the pane, looked down into the bustling street below. How different it all appeared to him now! Everything seemed covered, men, horses, trucks, with a sort of haze.

It is always so. When we are in deep trouble the ordinary sights of every day life assume an entirely different aspect, and at times we even find ourselves taking note of trivial circumstances that, as a rule, would quite escape our observation.

So now Guy noted how a horse, standing in front of a crockery store on the opposite side of the street, lowered his head and twisted it round in the attempt to see after a little yellow dog that had come trotting along the sidewalk past him.

The next minute the recollection of his trouble swept back over the boy in a great wave and "What will mother say? It will almost kill her," was the refrain that kept repeating itself over and over in his brain till the moving throng in the thoroughfare below seemed to be whirling round like the figures in a zoetrope.

Guy was growing giddy himself and clutched the window frame for support.

Just then came the call: "Hammersley, you may return now."

CHAPTER V.

IN THE SHOE STORE.

WHEN Guy re-entered Mr. Inwood's room, he found Mr. Fox and Mr. Tretbar with their chairs drawn up close to that of the advertising manager. Evidently their heads had been together in most serious discussion.

"Young man," began Mr. Inwood, "we have come to a decision, and one, I am bound to say, which your obstinacy does not in the least merit. It is this : in consideration of your mother's feelings and those of Mr. Burdell, I will not press the charge. Mr. Fox will replace the thirteen dollars and dismiss you from his employ. The case will not be brought into the courts, and we will do our best to keep it out of the newspapers. As I said before, you do not deserve this clemency, and if you have a spark of gratitude in your heart, it ought to send you down upon your knees before Mr. Fox to thank him for his consideration."

Gratitude ! The word seemed a mockery to Guy, used in this connection. He was to be sent off, unexculpated, branded, with the suspicion of having

committed a theft, and was expected to be grateful !

He could not speak, he felt a choking sensation in his throat, while not the color of shame, but the pallor of hopelessness overspread his face. He made a desperate effort and then forced out the words : " I did not take the money. What more can I say ? "

" Say no more, but go," blazed forth Mr. Fox, and Guy lost no time in taking advantage of the permission.

Without another look at the three hard faces of his judges, he turned and walked rapidly out toward the stairway, past the two rows of staring girls, who, he could feel without looking, all stopped their work to gaze after him.

But when he reached the sidewalk, " What is the use of hurrying ? " was the question that confronted him. " No work to do, and I *cannot* go home before the usual time. I must not let mother know about this to-day. She has already had too much strain on her nerves. "

The hands on the big dial in front of a clock store pointed to half-past two. It will be remembered that Guy had had no lunch, and now that the suspense about his fate was over, and he knew the worst, he felt as weak as a rag. But the very idea of entering a restaurant was repugnant to him.

When he reached the corner he turned up a street that would take him away from Fox & Burdell's, and presently passing a fruit stand, stopped and bought an apple. The stand was next to a vacant store, and as he stood leaning against the barred shutters, eating his decidedly frugal mid-day meal, his gaze

chanced to fall on the window of a shoe store opposite, wherein hung a card bearing the words :

BOY WANTED.

“If I could only get another position at once,” was the thought that flashed into Guy’s mind at the sight, “mother need never know !”

He hastily finished his apple, and then pulling himself together so as not to betray any trace of the ordeal through which he had just passed, crossed the street.

“Traubmann & Feder” was the name over the door, and at the moment trade appeared to be dull, for a shock-headed German, looking as if he might be Mr. Traubmann or Mr. Feder, stood in the doorway looking out, twiddling a toothpick between his teeth, while another Teutonic visaged gentleman, evidently the other partner in the firm, was seated on the outermost of a row of chairs, reading the advertisements in a morning paper.

The store was a medium sized one, and Guy judged must cater principally to the wants of men employed in the butter and cheese houses in the vicinity.

The instant he entered the establishment both men started towards him with a smiling “Good afternoon,” evidently under the impression that he was an intending purchaser.

“I came in response to that card in the window,” began Guy, addressing himself to the man with the paper.

“Ach, yes,” and there was a tinge of disappoint-

ment in the exclamation. "Vell, have you had any experience in shoes?"

"No," Guy was forced to admit, "but you don't expect me to make them, do you?"

"No, no; ve wants a poy to wait on gustomers and keep things neat around the shop. Ve do now so pig a pizness that Mr. Feder and me can't do it all alone mit ourselves, and the books too. I been a lookin' through de paper to see if anybody put a notice in for shoe stores' but I didn't see any, so I shust hung out that card."

"I think I could please you," said Guy, eagerly.

"The shoes have the numbers and prices marked on the box, don't they?"

"Yes, yes, that part's easy. It's the sellin' we're particular about; the talkin' smooth an' polite to de ladies what come in here. Now I tink you could do dat, by lookin' at you."

The German laughed and Guy blushed.

"How much do you pay?" he asked.

"Dree dollars a week; hours from seven to seven and Saturday nights to nine."

Guy almost gasped. The pay was small enough, but when he compared the hours with those he had been accustomed to at the restaurant it seemed as though he would be actually throwing himself away at the price. But would it be wise in him to let this opportunity of securing a position slip by? He could try it at any rate, and if he didn't like it, could leave at the end of the week. Then, when he tried for another place, he could say that he had discharged himself.

Thus Guy reasoned rapidly, and then replied:

"I'll try it. I'm not used to such early hours, but if you'll let me begin right now, I'll do my best."

"Very goot. Come back mit me to the desk and gif me your name and where you live, and some-pody's what can speak for your being honest and all that."

Guy complied, mentioned Dr. Pendleton for a reference, and then took off his coat, ready to get to work.

The other man came back and was introduced as Mr. Feder. The partners then retired to the little boxed-in compartment where the books were kept, while Guy was sent forward to make himself familiar with the contents of the various shelves.

"They seem to put a good deal of faith in me," he mused. "I rather think though that Mr. Traubmann, from the way he looked at me, imagined he has made a very good bargain. I suppose the boy he had in mind was a smaller chap of fourteen or fifteen. Wonder how I'm going to get my breakfast by half-past six, though? It would hardly pay me to get it at some restaurant down-town. Perhaps I can make some arrangement with Miss Stanwix, though."

He resolutely tried to banish from his mind all thoughts of the *Fireside Favorite*, and to this end bestirred himself to learn as much as possible about his new duties. He took down box after box, examined the shoes inside, as well as the statements of size and prices on the lid, and then made a mental note of the locality in the store in which certain styles were kept.

He had been thus occupied for about twenty minutes, the quiet of the place being broken only by the

thundering past now and then of a train on the Elevated Road, and the subdued murmur of the voices of the partners, as they went over the books together, when a lady entered. She was short and dumpy, had light hair, considerably frizzed up over her forehead, and wore a bonnet in which the combination of colors was enough to drive an artist distracted.

Guy quickly pushed back into place the box of Congress gaiters he had been in the act of removing, and walking up to her, said in his politest manner: "Good afternoon, madam. With what can I serve you?"

She started back, gave Guy a look that seemed to wither all the spirit within him, and then, pushing on past him, exclaimed: "What impudence is this? Cannot one wife come to see her man without being asked vat she wants?"

With that she sailed on majestically to the rear of the store where Guy soon heard her demanding of Mr. Traubmann if the new clerk didn't know a lady from a woman who came to buy shoes.

However, the husband did not think it worth while to reprove his recently acquired employee for not recognizing Mrs Traubmann, who presently departed, stuffing a roll of money into her card case. She had scarcely been gone a quarter of an hour, before the sky clouded over and presently the rain began to fall in sheets.

Guy was sent to take in the shoes that hung out in front for exhibition purposes, and while he was thus engaged a man hurried by him and entered the store. Guy followed to wait upon him and then saw that it was Mr. Inwood.

CHAPTER VI.

ADrift AGAIN.

“Just get me out a pair of rubbers as quick as you can. I’ve only got ten minutes to catch my boat, and I’ve had so much trouble with my throat lately, I don’t dare——”

Mr. Inwood had got that far before he looked up and saw Guy standing before him.

“Great George, is it you?” he exclaimed, so loudly that the attention of Mr. Traubmann was attracted to the spot.

He came hurrying forward, and then, “Ach, Mr. Inwood,” he cried, “how do you do, sir?”

“Quick, Traubmann,” responded the other, “get me a pair of rubbers. You know my size.”

Guy retired precipitately to the other side of the store.

“What a perversity of fate,” he reflected, “that that man of all others should happen in here to-day! And yet, I suppose he lives over in Jersey, and is on his way to the ferry, and so passes this shoe store every day in going to and from his office. I dare say it’s all up with me here now. I might as well go get my hat and coat at once.”

For during the process of trying on the rubbers Mr. Inwood kept up a steady but subdued murmur of talk, and when he rose to go Mr. Traubmann called after him: "Verra much obliged to you, sir, for letting me know."

Guy braced himself for the ordeal, which was not long delayed.

"I tinks you will not suit us, Mr. Hammersley."

Mr Traubmann came straight up to him after bowing Mr. Inwood out, and delivered himself of the above brief sentence.

"Very well, sir," was Guy's quiet response, and he started to go to the rear of the store, where he had hung his things. He paused for an instant, however, to say earnestly:

"Mr. Traubmann, I know very well what is the cause of this. I do not ask you to keep me, but before I go I want to say that I did not take that money."

That was all, and three minutes later Guy was out in the storm, without an umbrella, and with a weight of misery upon his heart that it seemed to him then could never be lifted off.

"Branded as a thief!" was the refrain that kept repeating itself in his ears.

Mechanically he hurried across the street to the Elevated Road Station and boarded an up-town train. It was now about the time he had been in the habit of returning from the restaurant. His mother need not know about the state of affairs for to-night at least. Perhaps in the morning he could get something better.

Dr. Pendleton could help him—unless Mr. Burdell should report to him that unfortunate day's occur-

rence. What a nightmare that was ! Whichever way he turned he found himself confronted by something or other in connection therewith.

When he reached home he was drenched through, but " My outward state is only in keeping with my inward one," he reflected, with a sort of dismal sense of satisfaction at the fitness of things.

" Guy," called his mother, as he stepped past her door to enter his own room first.

" Yes, mother ; I'm wet, and must change my clothes at once."

He hurried through the process, wondering as he paused for an instant to decide which suit to put on, how long it would be before he should be saved the necessity of making a choice by reason of having only one, or at the most two suits left. Then, bracing himself to try and seem as cheerful as ordinarily, he entered his mother's room.

" My poor, poor boy !"

Mrs. Hammersley had clasped her arms about his neck, and was sobbing on his shoulder.

" Why, mother, what is it ?" he asked, leading her to the sofa. " Have you felt any ill effects from your accident ?"

" Oh, no, no," she returned, trying to steady her voice. " It is you, my boy—to think they should accuse you of such dreadful things."

Guy felt a sudden sinking of the heart. His mother, then, knew all. But how had she learned it ? Was it possible that Mr. Fox could have sent her word ?

" But tell me that you cleared yourself, my son, and that they begged your pardon for daring to breathe

the least suspicion against your integrity. Sit down here by me and tell me all about it. All I know is what I got out of Eliza by closely questioning her as to what she overheard when she was setting the table for lunch."

Poor Guy! He thought he had already experienced the sharpest poignancy of his misfortune. But here was a deeper depth through which to pass: telling his mother that he had not been exonerated, had been dismissed from his position in disgrace, and already deprived of another by reason of the stigma attaching to his name.

It was a fearful ordeal, but when it was over Guy was granted that comfort which otherwise he could not have obtained. For his mother, her tears dried by her indignation, became his champion.

"This decides me, Guy," she said. "We will leave New York at the first opportunity. My boy shall not be exposed to such experiences."

"But your position at the music school!" exclaimed Guy.

"What if I can secure something better?" returned Mrs. Hammersley. "Oh, it does seem as if sometimes our misfortunes were blessings in disguise!"

Guy looked at his mother in utter astonishment. What did she mean? Surely she must be wandering in her mind, he thought.

"Yes," she went on, "if it hadn't been for my being run over, Colonel Starr"—Guy started at the mention of this name—"wouldn't have come here and Miss Stanwix been able to tell me what she did."

"Mother, what do you mean?" exclaimed Guy,

startled at he knew not exactly what, and all his prejudices against Colonel Starr reasserting themselves in force. "What did Miss Stanwix tell you?"

"Something that the colonel told her on the way down stairs this afternoon. You know they are old friends and neighbors, and in mentioning to her that he had heard me sing that morning in church, he added that he was surprised I did not seek a larger public, and intimated, so Miss Stanwix tells me, that as soon as I recovered from the shock of the accident he would formally propose an engagement to me for a series of concerts."

"Oh, mother," cried Guy, "surely you would not think of accepting! Lower yourself to go about the country like a combination show. It is preposterous."

"Guy, you are absurdly prejudiced," responded Mrs. Hammersley with considerable asperity. "Does Patti lower herself? Was Jenny Lind preposterous? But wait till you hear more. It has nothing to do with a theatrical venture. Colonel Starr—who won his title by most honorable service in the war—is a member of a prominent firm of piano manufacturers, and is therefore intensely interested in musical matters. He is very anxious to form a company to travel with Miss Ruth Farleigh, an English girl who has just come over here, and who is a marvelous performer on the violin. As I told you, he more than hinted he was going to ask me to join the company, and I think should he do so I would accept. And I dare say that he could find a position for you with the organization. Indeed, he must do so, or I will not consent."

It was months since Guy had seen his mother so

animated. It was apparent that she was strongly interested in the idea Miss Stanwix's talk had suggested to her.

"Of course it would be a sacrifice, in one sense," she went on, "for me to give up a permanent abiding place, but who knows but what I may earn enough in a few seasons to purchase a little home for ourselves in some charming near-by place like Short Hills or Pelham?"

At this point the bell summoned them to dinner. Guy would gladly have stayed away. He did not know how many Eliza might have told of what she had overheard. But then, he reflected, he was innocent, and should not be ashamed of anything, so, though it cost him an effort, he tried to summon all his usual buoyancy of spirits when he descended to the dining-room with his mother.

They sat at a small side table, and thus did not come into direct communication with the other boarders, for which, on the present occasion, Guy was devoutly grateful. But all of the ladies came up to Mrs. Hammersley to inquire how she felt after her experience of the morning, and of course they all spoke to him.

The accident, however, furnished the main topic of conversation, and at last the meal, for which Guy had but little appetite, was over and they went upstairs.

"Then you do not want me to look for another position, mother?" began Guy, when they were once more seated in his room.

"Not for a day or two at any rate," was the answer.

“The idea of their thinking you were a thief! I shouldn’t be a bit surprised if that man Inwood hid the money away himself, and tried to double it in this disgraceful way.”

Guy could not believe a business man could bring himself to do such a despicable thing, and while they were discussing the matter Eliza knocked and announced that Colonel Starr was in the parlor and would like to know if Mrs. Hammersly could give him a brief interview.

“Certainly, I will go down at once. Guy, you come with me. Who knows but a way will now be opened for both of us?”

CHAPTER VII.

COLONEL STARR.

“My dear madam, inexpressibly charmed, I am sure, to behold you so completely recovered from your shock of this morning.”

Thus Colonel Starr, when Mrs. Hammersley and her son entered the parlor. All Guy's dislike for, and distrust of, the man reasserted itself as he listened to the smooth, measured tones of the voice which had a sort of cloying sweetness about it that somehow reminded the boy of a serpent gifted with the power of fascinating its victims.

“Ah, and your son,” went on the colonel, extending his hand to Guy. “How greatly he favors you in looks, Mrs. Hammersley. I am sure I could not pay the young man a greater compliment than to say this.”

“Why, I have never had that said of us before, Colonel Starr,” and Guy, who was looking steadily at his mother, to see how she received the fulsome flattery of her caller, thought he detected a look almost of terror pass across her face. It was gone in an instant, however, and the boy thought it must all have

been his imagination. His nerves, poor fellow, had been so tried that day !

After a few more inquiries regarding what action, if any, Mrs. Hammersley intended to take regarding a suit for damages against the express company, Colonel Starr gave a preparatory cough and proceeded at once to business.

"I trust, Mrs. Hammersley," he began, "you will not think I am presuming on a short acquaintance, if I now broach a subject which is very near my heart."

"Great Scott !" thought Guy. "Is the man going to propose ?"

"May I be permitted to inquire," the colonel went on, "if you are irrevocably bound to the School of Music ?"

"No, nothing was said about a time limit," replied Mrs. Hammersley. "You know I had my reputation to make and I might not suit the patrons, so it was left so that either party could dissolve the contract, if I may call it so, at pleasure."

"Quite right, quite right," broke out the colonel, looking immensely pleased. "Then I will not be considered as 'out of order' if I ask your consideration of another engagement I should like to tender you."

He then went on to state that he had the refusal of the right to pilot the tour of the renowned English girl violinist, Miss Ruth Farleigh. He must close with her on the following day or fail to secure her, and all now depended on getting together a first class company at the shortest possible notice.

"All that now remains, Mrs. Hammersley," the colonel concluded, "is for you to give your consent to becoming the leading soprano of the Starr Concert Company. I have heard you sing, and I assure you that a veritable triumph awaits you on the concert stage. Indeed, so high a value do I set on your services that I will make you the same offer that I did to Miss Farleigh, one eighth of the gross receipts."

"But—but, you are very good, Colonel Starr," rejoined Mrs. Hammersley, "but I think, seeing that I have no fortune to fall back on, it would be inadvisable for me to throw up a salaried position."

Guy, sitting just behind his mother, felt like softly applauding. She was evidently not going to be deceived by the smooth spoken colonel after all.

But the latter was ready with reinforcements.

"My dear madam," he exclaimed, "you mistake me. I am offering you something much better than any salary could be. This is the way of it: the entire receipts will be counted every night, and three fourths set aside for expenses of hall, advertising, salaries of other artists and my own profits. Of the other fourth, one half goes to Miss Farleigh, the other to yourself. As our expenses will necessarily be heavy, you will thus be assured of receiving as much, and sometimes, a great deal more than myself. Could anything be more liberal, madam?" and Colonel Starr lay back in his chair with a sort of joyous sigh, as though ready to be martyred for his self-sacrifice in the cause of art.

"Yes, Colonel Starr," responded Mrs. Hammersley, "your proposition is indeed a most generous one,

so far as it goes, and I appreciate most deeply the high, I fear me altogether too high value, you set upon my services, but what if the receipts are not sufficient to——”

But here the colonel broke in with : “ Your pardon, madam, for interrupting, but you entirely misconceive the nature of the enterprise which I am about to inaugurate. Miss Farleigh is a great card, one certain to draw immense houses. The English papers are teeming with favorable notices of her wonderful abilities, and everything English takes nowadays, you know. Besides, a woman violinist is still something of a novelty, so we have more than one string to our bow in respect to this one artist alone,” and Colonel Starr laughed softly at the implied pun.

“ Then—how much—that is, do you think I could be sure of making at least fifty dollars a week if I should decide to accept? ” said Mrs. Hammersley.

“ Fifty a week ! ” cried the colonel, with a rising inflection, as if to say that such a sum was not worth mentioning. “ Why, just look at it for one moment in this light. We open with a concert, say in Chickering Hall, at a dollar a seat. Suppose, merely suppose, that there are but three hundred people present—an absurdly low estimate of course, but I wish to convince you fairly. Well, that means three hundred dollars gross receipts. I get two hundred and twenty-five, Miss Farleigh thirty-seven and a half, yourself the same. And this for one night only, remember, and at a low basis, ridiculously low, of course, as Chickering Hall seats some 1250 persons. Four

nights of such business in seven would give you a weekly income of one hundred and fifty dollars."

Certainly this was very alluring. Even Guy could find but one flaw in it: the strangeness of the fact that his mother, a singer without any reputation to speak of, should get as much as Miss Farleigh, whose praises the colonel had sounded so highly. He determined to speak about it.

"Colonel Starr," he ventured to interpose, "as my mother has no one but me to look to in financial matters, I trust both you and she will pardon me if I put one question."

"Certainly, my dear young sir," returned the colonel, with unabated affability. "Eminently right and proper for you to do so. What is it you would like to know?"

"Why my mother should get as much as Miss Farleigh, who you say is such a great drawing card."

Guy expected to see the colonel's face fall at this evidence of penetration beneath the smooth, outer surface of his proposition. But nothing of the sort took place.

The colonel gave a short laugh, and half turning in his chair, let his hand drop familiarly on Guy's knee as he replied: "Ah, Mrs. Hammersley, there is no fear of your ever being duped by the designing knaves of whom our city has too large a supply. This boy of yours will be an all-sufficient protection. And now to explain, my dear Mr. Guy, why I offer Miss Farleigh the same terms as I do your mother, I have simply to say that Miss Farleigh is extremely young, barely eighteen, and of course cannot expect

to command the prices of older and more experienced performers. In fact, she has never yet appeared in public. I am to have the honor of bringing her out."

Guy's heart gave a leap. He had his man this time sure, he thought.

"But you told us a few moments ago," he broke in, "that she had made a great sensation in England."

For one instant Guy detected a peculiar glitter in Colonel Starr's eye, but his voice was as soft as ever as he answered :

"Her appearances on the other side were entirely amateur. Admission was only by invitation. And now, Mrs. Hammersley, what do you say? As I told you, I cannot hold the offer open beyond to-morrow, and I should very much, like to have your answer to-night."

At this moment Eliza appeared at the door and handed in a note addressed to Mrs. Florence King Hammersley.

Mrs. Hammersley started when she saw the handwriting.

"Will you pardon me if I read this at once?" she said, turning to Colonel Starr. "I think it may be important."

"Certainly, madam," responded the colonel with a flourish of the hand that wore the most rings.

And tearing open the envelope, the lady found herself confronted with these lines :

MRS FLORENCE KING HAMMERSLEY :

DEAR MADAM—As you will remember, according to the terms of our arrangement, either party could

terminate at will the engagement you have as a member of our staff of instructors. We shall have no further need of your services from this date.

J. STANLEY SINCLAIR,
Chairman of Committee.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. HAMMERSLEY CLOSES WITH THE COLONEL.

Guy saw the warm blood rush into his mother's cheeks, to be succeeded by a deadly pallor. She held the letter, so cruelly worded, out to him, and with one swift glance he had taken in the contents.

"It is all through me," he told himself. "Mr. Sinclair has heard of my dismissal from Fox & Burdell's."

Meanwhile Mrs. Hammersley is speaking to the colonel. But what is this she is saying?

"Colonel Starr, I have decided to accept your offer. Consider me at your disposal, that is, on one condition."

"And what, madam, is that?"

The colonel's eyes glistened, and his two hands crept near to one another, as if to be all ready, in case the condition should not be too hard a one, to rub themselves against each other in token of felicitation.

"That you give my son a position with the troupe. I cannot be separated from him."

The colonel's hands spread apart, and one sought

his knee, while the other was rubbed reflectively across his smooth-shaven chin.

"Ah—um," he murmured. "What are the accomplishments of your son? Er—has he inherited any of your talent in the musical line?"

Again that strange look came over the mother's face, but, as before, it vanished in an instant, and she was smiling as she replied to the colonel's question: "No, Guy is not musical except in the sense that he loves to listen to fine performers; he does not even play the banjo. His only accomplishment, so far as I am aware, is in the line of keeping accounts. Is your business staff full?"

"Well," rejoined the colonel, "you know the management of a concert troupe is not such an onerous affair as that of an opera company would be; but if your son would consent to accept a small salary, I think I could fix matters. If—for instance—he wouldn't mind taking tickets—I can offer him six dollars a week."

"Very good; we will close with that, then," interposed Mrs. Hammersley, in the tone of one who wished that the interview should be ended.

"Excellent, madam," exclaimed the colonel, rising with cheerful alacrity. "You have removed a great weight from my heart; that weight the fear that I could not secure you. Now if you will only sign your name to this brief screed, I can go on my way rejoicing."

As he spoke, the colonel took a sheet of foolscap, pretty well filled with writing, from his pocket, and handed it, with a fountain pen, to Mrs. Hammersley.

It would be well-nigh impossible to describe Guy's feelings during all this. Utter despair would come about as near to it as anything.

What would be the result of his mother's placing herself within the power of this man whom, in spite of his fair speaking, Guy could not but distrust? And it was all owing to him, Guy, for had not Mrs. Hammersley herself told him that his experience that day down-town had decided her in the matter? And now this curt note of dismissal from the School of Music had left her no choice in the matter.

And this, too, had doubtless come about through him! To be sure he was not guilty of the theft of the thirteen dollars, but that did not affect the result.

So now he felt that his tongue was tied. He had already said as much as he dared. Instead of objecting, on account of a mere prejudice against the personality of a man, ought he not rather to feel grateful that they were able to make such advantageous arrangements?

Supposing Colonel Starr had not turned up. What would have been the prospects for his mother and himself now both were deprived of their positions? Surely he ought to look upon this opportunity to join the forces of the Starr Concert Company as one of the most fortuitous circumstances that had befallen them since their struggle with the world had begun.

And yet, try as he would to see things in this light, he shivered inwardly as he saw his mother take a music book from the piano, place the sheet of foolscap upon it, and then write her name at the bottom in her pretty, graceful hand.

“There, madam!” exclaimed the colonel, who made no effort to conceal his delight at the realization of his hopes, “you are now fairly embarked on a career that I am certain will redound to your good, not only in a pecuniary sense but in fame as well. This, in your case, will be almost, if not quite, as good as money; for of course when your twenty weeks’ season is over, you will be at liberty to renew with me, or others, on your own terms.”

“And when do you want—that is, if you will be kind enough to give me some directions, Colonel Starr, as to what you wish me to do,” rejoined Mrs. Hammersley, by no means showing in either voice or manner the enthusiasm that was expected of her.

“Oh, to be sure. First I want you to meet Miss Farleigh. She is a charming girl, I assure you. If you like, I will call for you to-morrow morning, and we will go down to her hotel and see her. We can then talk over the make up of programmes, the date of our first performance, and so on.”

“Is Miss Farleigh’s mother with her?” inquired Mrs. Hammersley.

“No; she is an orphan, and has come over with her brother, a young man about your son’s age, I should judge. He is to travel with us too. They will make pleasant companions for one another.”

“Talks about me as if I was nine years old,” said Guy to himself; and he felt a deep sense of relief when the colonel shook hands and bowed himself out, with an appointment to call the next day at ten.

“Mother,” said Guy, as soon as the door

closed on them in their own rooms, "did you read that contract before you signed it?"

"Certainly I did. It was simply a repetition of what he told us. Why do you mistrust that man so greatly, Guy?"

"Because of his whole manner," the boy burst out. "He is too plausible, too smooth-spoken. I may be wrong; and I feel that when I have brought all this upon us——"

"Guy, do not speak that way," cried his mother. "It is not you, it is the harsh, cruel injustice of the world. I never wanted you to go away from me, and just as soon as I am sure that I can do well with the concert company, I shall insist on your giving up your position as ticket-taker."

"But I do not want to live upon you," objected Guy. "I am seventeen, and surely——"

His mother stopped him with a wave of the hand and a smile.

"You need not be idle, my dear boy. If all goes as I trust it will, I shall need you to manage my affairs. All singers have their managers, you know, and you can be mine. And, by the way, I wish you would stop in at Ditson's to-morrow morning and get me some music I want. I will make you out a list."

Guy slept but little that night. His brain was too full of dire foreboding and unavailing regret. His mother's very cheerfulness was a source of worryment to him.

He was afraid that she would not be sufficiently on her guard against any ticks Starr (it was in this

irreverent manner that Guy always thought of the colonel) might try to play at her expense.

At last he fell asleep from sheer weariness of the efforts he had been making to woo slumber. And such frightful dreams as he had !

In one he was a hangman, with the task of executing thirteen shop girls, who all, as they came up under the fatal noose, pointed a finger at him and muttered, " You did it, you ! " In another he saw his mother drowning before his eyes, while a man with gold-rimmed eyeglasses fiddled away on the bank of the river for dear life, and would not let him approach to save her.

Thus it came to pass that in the morning he did not awake with that usual feeling of buoyancy which is such a valuable attribute of youth. And yet the brilliant autumn sunshine which streamed in at the window gradually infused him with hope in spite of himself, and " I cannot improve matters by worrying about them," he told himself as he dressed, " and I *can* make mother's burden heavier by putting on glum looks."

So he put all the gloom of yesterday away from him, and his " good morning " to his mother had the cheery, old-time ring to it. And he had his reward in the reflected brightness he saw in her face.

Promptly at ten o'clock Colonel Starr presented himself, and, finding that Guy had not gone downtown, invited him to go along to Miss Farleigh's hotel.

" You will find her brother there," he said, " and will be able to make his acquaintance."

CHAPTER IX.

A SUDDEN MOVE.

THE hotel at which the Farleighs were stopping was within walking distance of the Hammersleys' boarding-house, and within twenty minutes our friends found themselves in a sunny room, being warmly welcomed by a tall girl with a deep, rich voice and a strangely sweet face.

"I am so glad to see you, Mrs. Hammersley," she said, as she gave that lady's hand a lingering pressure. "You know all my friends in this country are men, and though they are very kind, yet I hunger at times for a confidential chat with some one who will remind me of my sister. You know Ward and I have never been away from her before. She has taken care of us ever since mamma died."

Poor girl! she was only eighteen, and so homesick, and the sight of Mrs. Hammersley's motherly face went straight to her heart and impelled her to make all these confidences in a breath, as it were.

While she was speaking a young fellow of sixteen entered the room, and was at once presented as "brother Ward."

Guy took to him at once, as how could he help

doing when he was the living image of his handsome sister, only a trifle shorter and carrying his head a little more confidently?

It transpired that Miss Farleigh wanted some new music, too, and before the boys had a chance to exchange more than half a dozen words, Colonel Starr suggested that Guy show Ward the way to Ditson's. Nothing loath, he expressed his entire readiness to do so, and the two were soon walking down Broadway together.

"Do you know," began young Farleigh, as soon as they were in the street, "I find it almost impossible to realize that I am in America. A month ago I had no more idea of coming than of taking a journey to Mercury."

"Then—you have not known Colonel Starr long?" asked Guy, tentatively, for he was anxious to ascertain how the Farleighs came to have business relations with the impresario.

"Only two months," was the answer. "You see, this is the way of it. My sister—my elder one, Gwendoline—has let our house in London for lodgers since father died, and Colonel Starr stopped with us when he was over this summer. He heard Ruth play and just about went wild over it. Declared that she'd make a fortune if she only came to America, and finally persuaded us into it. I was just out of school, and sister had some money saved up to start me in business, but the colonel told us that in one season the amount would be quadrupled, so we spent part of it to cross and the rest of it is going in hotel bills. And I say, what do you think of

Colonel Starr? How long have *you* known him?"

"Since yesterday," answered Guy, fully prepared for the whistle of astonishment with which the statement was received.

"And—and hasn't your mother known him any longer either?" added Ward.

"No."

"Then you can't tell me any more about him than I know already," summed up the English lad, and he turned on Guy with an odd motion of the eyes and mouth which the latter found not much difficulty in interpreting.

As if by mutual agreement the subject of Colonel Starr was now dropped and the boys talked of New York and the sights thereof until they reached Ditson's, where each purchased the music of which he had a list and then hastened back to the hotel. But that brief interchange of words about the colonel had served to make the two better friends than a whole day of ordinary converse would have done.

They found the two ladies alone, Mrs. Hammersley at the piano, playing an accompaniment to Ruth's rendering of a beautiful composition of Vieuxtemps's on the violin. They stepped in quietly, and Guy listened with charmed intentness till the piece was finished, when he broke into involuntary applause.

It was the first time during his waking hours that he had forgotten the burden that episode at the office of the *Fireside Favorite* had laid upon his heart.

"We are to give our first concert next Thursday, Guy," said his mother. "Colonel Starr has gone off to

make the final arrangements now, and we start Wednesday evening."

"Why, where are we going?" exclaimed Guy. "I thought we were to make our first appearance here at Chickering Hall."

"No, he has been compelled very suddenly to change his plans, and we are to go West at once."

"What part of the West? Anywhere near Cincinnati?" asked Guy, quickly.

"No; to some town in Pennsylvania I never heard of before—Brilling, I think the name of it is. But you can see that we haven't much time to spare."

It was indeed rather short notice, but the rush of preparation accorded well with Guy's feelings. He seemed to himself to have lived in a constant whirl since just twenty-four hours previous when he had gone on that errand for Mr. Fox.

Besides, with plenty to occupy his hands, he was not so prone to worry his mind with useless repinings over the nature of the enterprise on which they were now embarked.

Miss Stanwix seemed sincerely sorry to lose her boarders, aside from any financial interest she might have in their departure. Indeed, she had occupants for the vacated rooms already booked.

Not one word did Mrs. Hammersley say to Guy about that curt dismissal from the School of Music. He could not help wondering if he would have felt any easier in his mind had the worthy colonel not turned up.

"Certainly we should have been worse off in that case," he tried to assure himself, and by the day of

departure he had in so far succeeded that he was enabled to get up a feeling of considerable curiosity to see the other members of the Starr Concert Company, whom he expected to find on the train.

The Hammersleys and the Farleighs had arranged to go down to the ferry in the same carriage, and on arriving there found the colonel waiting for them, a bouquet of roses in each hand, one of which he handed to Mrs. Hammersley, the other to Ruth Farleigh. He had also provided tickets for the entire party, with pleasant quarters in the Pullman, and soon after the train started led the way to a well-spread dinner table in the dining car.

"But, Colonel Starr," queried Ruth, as they took seats and she noticed that all the chairs were filled, "where are the rest?"

"The rest, Miss Farleigh? The rest of what?" and the colonel smiled affably as he bent over the shoulder of the fair young *prima donna*.

"Why, the rest of the company, to be sure. I thought we should find them all here."

"Ah, cruel one, to remind me at this auspicious moment of the 'shop,' of the business cares that are whitening my hairs before their time. Ah, such a 'heavenly' tenor, as you ladies would say, as I had secured, and now he sends me word that he has the diphtheria and has been taken to the hospital. And my accompanist, a buffo bass of wonderful abilities, has been served with a subpoena as a witness in an important case and cannot join us till next week some time."

Guy and Ward exchanged swift, meaning glances,

while Mrs. Hammersley exclaimed : "Who, then, can play my accompaniments? Have you secured a substitute?"

"And who will play mine?" added Ruth.

"I should be most happy to give this young man a position, if he will accept it," and the colonel placed his hand for an instant, with an air of paternal guardianship, on Ward's shoulder.

"I?" The boy looked around in unbounded astonishment. "Why, I have never played for any one but Ruth in my life."

"But you are a quick reader of music," interposed the colonel, suavely. "I have heard your sister say so. With just a little practice I will warrant you will do beautifully, and that reminds me, Master Guy, wouldn't you like me to relieve you of that ticket-taking business, and earn your salary on the stage instead?"

Guy's amazement far exceeded Ward's. But the colonel did not allow him time to more than draw in a long breath preparatory to protesting his inability to do anything of the sort.

"I heard from Miss Stanwix how you had entertained the household there one evening by reading a series of humorous selections. I have a stock of some excellent productions in my satchel which I will show you after dinner, and I am sure that with your voice and presence, you can make yourself a noteworthy feature of the evening's entertainment. For a good reader is a *rara avis*, and when he appeals to the humorous side of the great American people his success is assured. And now let us drop 'shop' and take up dinner."

CHAPTER X.

THE ARRIVAL AT BRILLING.

OUR friends of the Starr Concert Company were not due at Brilling until three o'clock in the afternoon of the next day. Meantime, as the colonel spent much of his time in the smoking car, the quartette had ample opportunity to discuss the situation among themselves.

And the Farleighs were as much astounded as were the Hammersleys on realizing that the troupe was not a large one, consisting of at least half a dozen artists. It had now resolved itself into an organization of only three; for Ward was merely to play the accompaniments.

"I'll tell you one thing that strikes me as jolly queer," he said as he and Guy occupied seats together while the berths were being made up. "You know when the colonel opened his satchel to get out those books for you. Well, he threw a lot of things out on the seat next to me, and among them was a handbill, and I'm positive neither Tellman's nor Dart's name was on it. Now these must have been printed some time ago, and the colonel claims that he did not know of the defection of these two men till this afternoon, and he had no time to replace them."

“And you conclude?” interjected Guy.

“That he never intended the company to consist of more members that at present constitute it. As far as I can make out, we ‘show,’ as they call it, only at one-night stands, so if the public in one town are disgusted, it will be too far away to affect the business at the next.”

“In plain terms then,” went on Guy, “you believe Colonel Starr to be a fraud.”

“I’m afraid he is,” answered Ward, “but I wouldn’t for the world have my sister know it. You see, she has signed with him for the season, and I suppose he could make things mighty unpleasant for her if she should attempt to break the contract. Besides, we’d be stranded without a thing to fall back upon; not money enough to take us home, and only enough to pay our expenses for about a week.”

“But if you believe Colonel Starr to be an irresponsible person,” interposed Guy, “it seems to me that you will not be any better off by remaining with him.”

“Oh, but you see it’s just this way,” responded the other. “Ruth’s contract says that she is to have an eighth of the gross receipts. Well, if the thing doesn’t draw, he can’t get enough himself to go on with, and perhaps the little we should get would be enough to buy our passage back home. Of course if my sister was on a regular salary things would be different.”

“Then you are of the opinion that the only one to be cheated is the public, are you?” asked Guy, half laughingly.

"It looks most awfully as if that was the case, doesn't it now?" rejoined Ward. "And I say it without any disrespect to your mother or my sister. But the thing that's actually bothering me the most is the idea of having to play on the stage of an opera house, for that's where we open, the colonel says. If I get rattled, you see, it will not hurt me so much as it will your mother and Ruth."

"But you won't be obliged to *face* the audience as I shall," returned Guy. "And if they don't like what I am reading, I know I shall feel it, and you can imagine what sort of an effect it will have upon me. Still, as long as it lets me out of taking tickets I suppose I shouldn't mind."

The fact of the matter was, Guy felt that he wouldn't have minded anything very much if only he could be relieved of that cloud of suspicion that he felt was resting over him in the minds of at least twenty persons, and perhaps many more, back in New York. The memory of that fearful experience was ever present with him to dampen his joys, intensify his fears, and make him, in short, as different from the high-spirited, light-hearted fellow at Fairlock as it was possible for the same individual to become.

Again that night he slept but little, and it was not till the train slowed up for Brilling that he forgot, for the time, the Old Man of the Sea load he was carrying. Even while making himself familiar with the humorous selections he intended reciting that night, he was sensible of a dull burden of contrasting gloom tugging away at his heartstrings meanwhile. But now, with the bustle of getting baggage together, preparatory

to quitting the cars after their long ride, and the natural curiosity to see what sort of a place Brilling was, he forgot for a time his *bete noir*.

The town appeared to be a good-sized one, with a preponderance of frame buildings, from the midst of which the Brilling Opera House stood out like a giant among pigmies. It was close to the station, and the travelers passed it on their way to the hotel.

"See there! What did I tell you?" exclaimed Ward, nudging Guy just as they were opposite the gaudily painted entrance. "Look at those billboards. Those posters must have been printed five days ago at least."

They were certainly very elaborate, done in three colors, with a picture of a blue girl, with yellow hair streaming down her back, playing on a green violin. Above this marvelous figment of the artist's imagination—for Ruth Farleigh's hair was almost black, and worn in a Psyche knot; she never dressed in any light colors except white, and most certainly she did not use a painted fiddle—the boldest of bold type set forth the fact that Brilling was to enjoy an entertainment by

THE STARR CONCERT COMPANY,

Combining an Unequaled Array of Talent, headed by
the Peerless and Unrivaed English Girl Violinist,

RUTH FARLEIGH.

Applauded by Two Hemispheres and Excelled in
None.

This brightly colored (in more senses than one) poster then went on to say :

Miss Farleigh will be Assisted by

MRS. FLORENCE KING,

The Eminent New York Soprano,

MR. REGINALD FAIRFAX,

The Famous Boy Orator, and

MASTER CLAIR DUFFET,

Only Fifteen, and Accompanist.

"Who is Mr. Reginald Fairfax?" Guy wanted to know.

"Why, that's you of course," returned Ward, "and 'Master Clair Duffet, only fifteen,' is your humble servant. Not content with turning me into a Frenchman, our friend the colonel must needs dock me of a year on my age. I suppose he'll be wanting me to appear in knickerbockers to sustain the illusion."

Poor Ward spoke better than he knew. They had barely reached the hotel, where the two boys were assigned a room together, when the colonel presented himself in the doorway, smiling contentedly, and rubbing his hands together in a manner which, as Ward whispered to Guy, "meant business."

"Here we are, young gentlemen," he began, "all ready to commence our work. As soon as the ladies are a little rested we shall walk around to the opera house for a rehearsal, and meantime—ah, by the way,

Hammersley, you brought your dress suit with you, did you?"

"Yes, I have it in the trunk here, and expect to wear it to-night," replied Guy.

"And you," went on the manager, turning to Ward, "have you yours with you, too?"

"I haven't any," said the boy, bluntly.

"Ah, that is too bad," murmured the colonel, and for an instant he seemed to be buried in profound, melancholy reflection. Then he suddenly raised his head and brought two fingers of his right hand with an impressive whack against the palm of his left.

"The very thing!" he exclaimed. "You English chaps are always playing football and other sports, and I'll warrant you have a pair of knickerbockers in your trunk. They're coming into style again, you know, so you can wear them."

Ward was speechless for an instant. Then, with all a Briton's blood in his face, he retorted: "Colonel Starr, I have no suit such as you describe with me, and if I had, I would not wear it. I did not expect to appear as a performer when I came away, and if I can't go on in my black cutaway and white tie, I can stay off and content myself with occupying the position it was originally intended I should fill—that of escort to my sister."

"Oh, well, I only spoke for your own good and with an effort to make you feel as comfortable as possible during the performance," returned the colonel with most unexpected mildness, and then he quietly withdrew.

"That man is terribly exasperating," broke forth

Ward, when they were alone. "He won't even please a fellow by getting mad. I expected nothing less than to have him storm out at me when I let loose on him in that fashion, but——"

"Still waters run deep, you know," interposed Guy, "at the same time I am glad you asserted your independence. You would have cut a pretty figure seated at the piano in a football suit."

"Shouldn't I? Only imagine it!"

Then they both laughed, felt better, and soon afterward went over to the opera house with the ladies for a rehearsal, little dreaming that an incident more marked than Ward's appearance in a football suit was to make the evening performance memorable

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNFINISHED SONG.

"MAGNIFICENT, superb !" was the colonel's enthusiastic comment when the rehearsal was over, and then he added : "We're going to have a splendid house. The advance sale has been something enormous. Now don't any of you be seized with stage fright, and we shall score a grand success."

But when they had eaten dinner, and returned to the cheerless region behind the scenes of Brilling's temple of amusement, not only were Ward and Guy quaking in their shoes, but poor Ruth was almost faint with nervousness, and Mrs. Hammersley was in equally bad case from worriment of mind caused by the deplorable condition of her fellow performers.

"The house is just packed," Ward turned around from the peep hole in the proscenium arch to inform Guy. "I don't see how Starr can get out of giving your mother and my sister a good big generous eighth this time at any rate, as their share of the receipts."

Which shows that Ward Farleigh does not know Colonel Starr as thoroughly as he imagines he does.

The programme for the evening after a good deal of discussion had been finally arranged as follows :

Ward was to go on first and play an overture on the piano, then Mrs. Hammersley was to sing, following whom Ruth would appear with her violin. Next Guy would come with a recitation, then his mother was to sing again, to be succeeded by Ruth's second appearance and another reading by Guy, the whole to conclude with a lively march by Ward.

"A mighty slim showing," commented the latter, tapping the elaborately got up "bill of the play" he held in his hand. "I know I wouldn't give a dollar to get in to hear it. I don't see what's brought all this crowd out."

"Oh, they didn't come to hear; they came to see what the fifteen-year-old accompanist and the boy orator look like, same as they'd go to gape at freaks in a museum," and there was more of bitterness than mirth in the laugh with which Guy punctuated his sentence.

But now appeared Colonel Starr, announcing that it was time to begin, and, quaking in every limb, Ward stationed himself close to the O. P. entrance, while the imposing impresario, in dress suit and rose in button-hole, went forth to introduce his "peerless combination of talent" to a Brilling audience. He soon came back to lead Ward out, and the latter could actually feel the sensation of disappointment that ran through the hall when he was seen to be a youth of sixteen, holding his head very high and not looking in the least like the "youthful prodigy" to which the American stage has lately been treated in such liberal quantities.

Not a hand was raised to applaud his entrance,

and the colonel whispered through his set teeth : " I told you how you ought to dress. You'd better have taken my advice."

As may be imagined this species of " I told you so" remark was not calculated to steady poor Ward's tottering limbs, but by a seeming anomaly of conditions, this is what it actually served to do.

" I'll show him that I'm worth something more to him than a show," he resolved, with sudden determination, and the combination of indignation he felt against the colonel and the firm purpose to excel that had on the instant taken possession of him brought a sparkle to his eye and a color to his cheek that made him even handsomer than usual.

He played entirely by ear, and sitting down at the piano, he struck into the popular overture to the " Merry Wives of Windsor," and rendered it with such verve and dash that when he ceased, a perfect storm of applause came as if by common consent, and irresistible impulse.

Ward rose and bowed his thanks, but very politely declined to respond to an encore, and as he walked off the stage with his limbs quite steady now, a young lady in the front seat gigglingly whispered to her neighbor : " My, Lu, isn't he stunning looking ?"

Warmed into good humor, the spectators greeted Mrs. " King " (the stage name Mrs. Hammersley had assumed) with a burst of hand clapping when she appeared, led out by the young pianist who had captured their fancy by sheer force of will. And indeed her appearance was such as to win admiration for her at the outset, before she had sung a note.

Dressed in white, she looked so young that Ward found it almost impossible to believe that she was the mother of a son older than himself. He felt her hand tremble in his, and a great fear took possession of him that she would not be able even to begin her air.

It was therefore with no little trepidation that he seated himself at the piano and played the few bars that preluded the "Carmen" air she was to sing. But the sweet, pure voice struck in at the proper place, and the opera house was filled with the richest melody.

Guy, listening with Ruth in the wings, thought he had never heard his mother sing so well ; and in spite of the adverse conditions under which she appeared, his heart swelled with pride to feel that she had it in her power to hold the vast audience spell-bound, for this she was clearly doing.

The song was almost finished, and glancing for an instant out among the audience, Ward saw ladies drop their opera-glasses and gentlemen put their canes out of the way in readiness to break out into enthusiastic applause. Suddenly the singer stopped short--there was a terrible pause, broken only by the few straggling notes that Ward struck in his confusion, then the same sweet voice was lifted once more ; but not this time in song.

It was a cry, a scream almost, as the singer took a few rapid steps across the stage to a lower proscenium box on the left. When she had almost reached it she sank down, with arms outstretched toward a boy of ten or eleven, who, in company with

a tall dignified-looking gentleman with gray side whiskers, had just entered the box.

The audience, as a matter of course, became at once greatly excited. Women shrieked, men sprang out of their seats, and some few made a rush toward the doors, under the impression that the house was afire. Indeed, there were all the ingredients of a panic present, and it is possible that one would have ensued, had it not been for Ward.

Seeing that Guy and the colonel had flown to Mrs. Hammersley's assistance, he decided that he could do the most good just where he was. So he at once struck into a lively air from "Martha" and kept it up till Mrs. Hammersley had been helped off. Then seeing that the spectators had calmed down, he made a bolt of it behind the scenes himself to find out what was the matter.

"No, no, not you, Guy," the mother was murmuring, trying to motion her son away from her.

She was lying on a property lounge that happened to be standing just inside the wings and Guy was bending over her with anxious solicitude. That she seemed to want the attentions of Colonel Starr rather than his own, cut the poor fellow to the heart, and on catching sight of Ward, he went off to lay his hand on the English lad's shoulder and say in a broken voice: "Farleigh, I don't know what's come over mother. She doesn't want me near her."

"Don't mind, old fellow," returned Ward, trying to put as much comfort as he could into the words. "The strain of singing so soon after the long journey was too much for her. It has made her flighty.

Come off with me for a while, back here where we can be at hand if wanted. There, see Ruth has gone to her, and the colonel has been sent away. Sister's a splendid hand in emergencies, and you may rely on her doing just the right thing."

Meanwhile Colonel Starr had had a message feebly whispered into his ear by the poor lady, who had grown terribly pale, and he was now going off to deliver it.

But first he walked out to the center of the stage and addressed the audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I regret very much that our performance should have been interrupted in this manner. Mrs. King has received a very severe mental shock, from which she is now recovering. I doubt if she will be able to appear again this evening. However, we will know better about that after a physician makes his report. Meantime, the star of the occasion, Miss Ruth Farleigh, will appear before you and with her violin bow draw forth such magic strains as the walls of this building have never before echoed back."

A round of applause greeted this grandiloquent speech and then the colonel stepped over to the left-hand box and was seen to speak a few words to the gentleman with the gray side whiskers. The latter immediately left the box and the colonel disappeared in the wings.

"Judge Dodge is not a doctor. I wonder what he is going behind for?"

This was the question that a large proportion of the spectators put to themselves when they saw this

little incident. For Judge Dodge was known to all, being the magnate, so to speak, of Brilling. He owned a large amount of the most valuable property in the town, including the opera house itself, and occupied a mansion on Elm Avenue that the townspeople regarded as little less than palatial.

He was a widower, and some few months previous had adopted the boy who was with him in the box. And the townspeople remarked how strange it was that Reginald, who was an exceedingly handsome little fellow, should have almost the same regal bearing that distinguished his "grandfather," as he had been taught to call Judge Dodge.

"Mrs. King seemed to be trying to get to his box when she fell," was the next thought that flashed into the collective Brilling mind. "Truly, there is something mysterious here."

The collective Brilling mind was right. There *was* a connection between Mrs. Hammersley's fiasco and Judge Dodge's box.

The latter was connected with the stage, and Colonel Starr met the judge at the door.

"You say Mrs. King wishes to speak with me," the capitalist repeated, as he followed the colonel between stacks of dusty scenery to the dressing-room, to which the soprano had by this time been removed.

"Yes; she asked for you very earnestly as soon as she recovered consciousness. 'The gentleman with the little boy,' she kept saying. 'I must see him!'"

"Ah, it is the boy!" exclaimed Judge Dodge. Then, drawing a deep sigh, he added: "This is what I have been dreading all along."

CHAPTER XII.

RECALLING THE PAST.

"THANK you, Colonel Starr," murmured Mrs. Hammersley, when the colonel presented himself at the door of her dressing-room, and introduced Judge Dodge. Then turning to Ruth, she added: "I am all right now, Miss Farleigh. Do not keep the audience waiting any longer, but go back with Colonel Starr."

"Yes, Miss Farleigh," spoke up the latter, "I promised that you would appear at once;" and the colonel stood back from the doorway to allow her to pass out first.

When they were gone, "Madam," began Judge Dodge, "you wished to see me about my boy."

"Yours, is he really yours?" burst forth Mrs. Hammersley, starting up from her chair. "No, it can't be possible. A mother's heart cannot deceive her. And I thought him lost to me forever. Tell me, I implore you, that he is not your very own."

Brilling's great man was strongly moved by the deep emotions of the woman whom, till this evening,

he had never looked upon. In gentlest tones he begged her to be calm, and then, when he had induced her to resume her seat, he added :

“No ; Reginald is not my very own, though I love him as if he were.”

“Then he’s mine—my lost boy Harold,” broke in Mrs. Hammersley. “Oh, let me see him—let me have him ! Have pity upon a mother bereaved for nine years of her child’s love.”

“But think, madam,” rejoined the capitalist, “this is no place for a reunion such as that. Besides, Reginald would not understand it. If what you say is true, he must be prepared. Besides, I must have some particulars from you about the case before I can consent to indorse your claim. I do not mean to be harsh, but you yourself must surely see the justice of such a course.”

“Yes, yes, I understand. I will tell you how it was. He is the son by my first marriage. We lived in Chicago. I was summoned suddenly, when he was about a year old, to Joliet, to the bedside of my dying mother. When the telegram came, Frank, my husband, had taken Harold, with the nurse, off to show him to an old chum of his who was confined to his room. There was no time to wait for them to come back if I wished to catch the express. I left word for them to follow me at once, and started off. I reached my mother’s side in time to hear her say her last words, and the next day read in the papers of a frightful railroad accident.”

Here Mrs. Hammersley paused for an instant, till she had mastered the emotions called up by the

recollections of this direful episode in her life. Then she went on rapidly :

“My husband and Harold, with his nurse, were on the train. The cars were telescoped, and fire added to the horrors of the scene. When they told me that I could not have even the poor comfort of burying my husband’s and child’s bodies, I was taken down with brain fever, and lay for eight weeks unconscious of what went on around me.”

“But, my dear madam,” Judge Dodge interposed at this point, “if your child was burnt in this holocaust, which, now you speak of it, I distinctly recall, how is it that you claim my Reginald to be your son?”

“How can I help doing so when he is the living image of his father?” was the instant reply.

“Then you believe——”

“That there was some terrible mistake in the awful confusion following the accident. There must have been other infants on the train, and Harold was claimed in the place of one that was killed. I am morally sure of it now ; legally, I suppose, we can only make ourselves so by tracing back the history of the boy you adopted. Can you give it to me briefly?”

“Only this much of it : I found him at an orphan asylum in Chicago. I was lonely in my big home, and determined to bring to it some little fellow to take the place of the one I lost when my wife died. I was attracted to Reginald at once from my first glance at his face, and, inquiring into his history, ascertained that he had been in the institution only a month.

He had been brought there from Johnstown, where his home and all his relatives had been swept away by the flood."

"And their name was——" Mrs. Hammersley interposed.

"Colburn," answered the judge. "Do you recognize it?"

"No," responded the other. "But if we could find papers giving an account of the accident, and discovered it there, I am sure you would ask for no further proof."

"No, I could not do so, madam," responded the judge, gravely. "But perhaps you can realize what it would mean to me to give up Reginald now. I have never seen a more lovable child, and yet with all that I have done for him he seems to be not in the least spoiled."

"What does he say about his life in Johnstown?" asked Mrs. Hammersley. "Was the family to which he belonged in good circumstances?"

"I understand so, and the boy has had an excellent grounding in his studies."

"Why, then, was it necessary to send him to an orphan asylum?" queried the lady, adding eagerly: "Don't you see that this bears on my side of the case? Any of the friends, their lives spared by the terrible flood, but their property destroyed, may have had doubts all along about the child's being a real Colburn, and now that they were forced to begin the world again, taken this opportunity of getting rid of a boy that was very possibly no kin to them. I can't account in any other way for their allowing such a

child to be brought up by public charity. Oh, Judge Dodge, you must see, you must feel, that it is a mother's heart pleads with you not to keep her longer away from her son !”

At this instant a burst of applause from the auditorium made its way into the dressing-room. Ruth had finished her first selection, and the audience was clamoring for an encore. The sound served to remind the judge that he had left his boy a long time alone, and that the little fellow must be wondering what had become of him.

But before he could decide what to do, Mrs. Hammersley continued :

“Let me see him, speak with him, if only for a moment. You need not say anything to him about—about that of which we have been speaking. You will grant me this favor to-night, will you not ?”

“Certainly, if you will accompany me back to the box. It has an ante-room, and the audience will not see you. But—but how shall I introduce you to Reginald ?”

“Can you not tell him that I am a friend—Mrs. Hammersley—say a friend of his father's ? That will make it all right, will it not ?”

“I think so ; but the mention of his father reminds me to ask you if you have not a photograph of your husband that I could see. I could then satisfy myself of the resemblance.”

“No, I have none here, but there is one in a trunk that is in storage in New York. I will send for it.”

Mrs. Hammersley rose as she spoke, and the judge opened the door for her to pass out. The softened

strains of Ruth's violin came to them as they threaded their way among the scenery to the entrance of the stage box.

In the latter, Reginald was sitting at the front, his chin propped on his hand, gazing steadfastly at the beautiful girl on the stage, and Judge Dodge had to call him twice before he heard.

"Reginald, here is a lady who used to know your father. Come back and speak to her."

With one final look at the fair violinist the boy obeyed, and accompanied the judge to the rear of the box, where Mrs. Hammersley was seated on the divan. By a great effort she mastered her emotions, and, putting out her hand, drew the boy to her, kissed him once, and then held him off at arm's length to look at him.

"Why, you are the lady that sang that beautiful song!" exclaimed Reginald. "And you didn't finish it. It was so pretty, too."

Judge Dodge, who was watching the effect of the interview closely, noticed that the soprano's lips twitched nervously as she heard the boy's voice.

"Why don't you ask Mrs. Hammersley if she would not like to come to see you to-morrow and sing the song, through for you, Reginald?" he said.

"Oh, will you?" cried the boy, putting out both hands impulsively to clasp hers. "I do so love music. You will come, won't you?"

"With all my heart, and what is more, I will sing another song to-night, *just for you*, Reginald;" and, kissing him once again, she rose hurriedly, as if afraid to trust herself further, and returned to the stage

just as Guy stepped out toward the footlights to begin his recitation of "Bridget Maloney on the Chinese Question."

But in what fearful contrast were the emotions of his heart to the sentiments on his lips! From his post in the wings, where he had been standing in readiness to go on as soon as Ruth should finish her encore, he had seen his mother enter the private box, and twice kiss the little boy whose beauty even Ward had remarked upon.

What did it mean? Why did she seem to want him, her own son, out of the way? Why, she was smiling back at the small boy now, and only two minutes before she had seemed like one in a faint!

Guy's head swam as he tried to find a solution to the mystery, and all the while he went on mechanically with his rendering of the mirth provoking monologue, not knowing at what instant he might break down.

CHAPTER XIII.

MOTHERLESS.

THE ordeal was over. Guy had finished his recitation in great shape, and received an approving pat on the shoulder from Colonel Starr as he fairly dashed into the wings, so rejoiced was he that he had got through.

"Now what will you give them for your encore?" asked the manager.

"What, have I got to do it all over again?" demanded poor Guy.

"No, certainly not the same piece; but a pathetic one would be best. Don't you hear them applauding?"

Guy certainly did, only too distinctly; and, realizing that the colonel had evidently counted on these recalls to lengthen out his programme to customary proportions, he saw there was no way out of it, and nerved himself to go back again and give a touching little ballad of Burns's that brought tears to more than one pair of eyes in the audience.

"And now I must see mother," he told himself, when he came off.

But he met her with a roll of music in her hand, about to go on and sing the song for which her name was down. There was a peculiar gleam in her eyes, and a strangely sweet yet sad smile overspread her face. She seemed not to see him as he passed close by her, nor to hear his low, pleading cry, "Mother!" Her gaze was fixed on that stage box opposite.

"What can have come over her that she should seem to avoid me so?" the poor fellow murmured; and, dropping into a rustic seat just within the side scenes, he buried his face in his hands and sat thus all through the air from "*Trovatore*," which his mother sang as he had never heard her sing it before.

And what a perfect storm of applause broke forth on the conclusion of the song! Ladies waved their handkerchiefs and men cried "*Bravo! Bravo!*" and at last, in response to the overwhelming demand, she gave "*Home, Sweet Home.*"

This completely broke Guy up, and so Mrs. Hammersley found him when she came off with Ward.

"Oh, my boy," she half gasped, and took his hands in hers as she passed in front of him.

"Mother," he cried, looking up through the mist that had gathered in his eyes. "What is it? What have I done that you can no longer confide in me, your son?"

"My son?" she repeated, starting back, almost as if the words had been a blow. Then "How can I tell him? how can I tell him?" she repeated to herself.

Then seeming to nerve herself, she added: "Come, Guy, come to my dressing-room with me. It is not

right I should longer keep you in ignorance, although I had—no, I cannot say hoped—I had expected to do so always.”

These words only served to disquiet Guy still more. Why should his mother have ceased to hope for the continuance of that which affected his welfare, he asked himself? But it was a question he could not answer, could only possess his soul in patience till his mother should explain.

“Guy,” she began at once, as soon as they had reached the little room under the iron stairway that led to the fly gallery, “do you remember anything of your early life—before you were five years old, I mean?”

“Not very distinctly, mother,” he answered. “I have often wished I could have a picture in my mind of what my father was like.”

“Then——” but here the poor lady broke down, and sobbing out, “Oh, how can I tell him?” she put her arms about Guy’s neck and clung to him desperately while she murmured: “If there was only a middle way, but there is none.”

“Why do you ask me this, mother?” rejoined Guy. “And what has it to do with your fainting on the stage a little while ago? And tell me who that gentleman with the gray whiskers is, and that little boy you kissed. I do not remember ever to have seen them before.”

Mrs. Hammersley lifted her head and answered quickly, as if not to give herself a chance to think: “That little boy is my son, Guy.”

“Then he is my brother, but I never knew——”

"No, my boy, he is not your brother."

"How can this be, though? If he is your son he must be."

"No, because I was a widow when I married your father."

Then came the inevitable conclusion which the mother had all along foreseen and dreaded.

"But this little fellow cannot be more than nine or ten. I am seventeen, and so—so if you are his very own mother, you can't be mine. Is it true? Tell me, what does all this mean?"

There was silence in the little room for an instant, while again, as during the former interview that had taken place there, the softened tones of Ruth's violin came floating in, reminding Guy of the "slow music" he had heard many times when attending the theater and a highly emotional play was being performed. How little he had imagined that such strains would ever serve as an accompaniment to a scene in his own life that was more thrilling in momentous interest than anything he had ever witnessed on the stage!

"Yes, Guy, my boy, it is true!" responded Mrs. Hammersley, softly. "But that doesn't prevent my caring for you as if you were my very own."

"But why haven't I known of this before?" Guy wanted to know.

"Because, as I said, I trusted that it might never be necessary to tell you. When I married your father, you were a little fellow of five, and I took you at once to my heart of hearts, in place of the baby I thought was lost to me forever. And with your

father's full consent you were brought up to believe that I was really your mother."

"But—but I don't understand how you could do that," said Guy. The whole thing still seemed utterly incomprehensible to him. He felt as though the foundations of the universe had been suddenly overturned. "I should think some one, some one of our friends, would have been certain to have said something in an unguarded moment that would have roused my suspicions."

"That was easily managed. Soon after our marriage we removed from Chicago to Cincinnati, and all the friends we made there believed you to be my son, for neither your father nor I had ever been there before."

"But where was your own son all this time, the boy who's out there in the box at this very minute, and who of course is more to you than I am?"

In spite of himself, Guy's tone took on a touch of bitterness. He felt that now indeed he was alone in the world, that there was no person to whom he had a right to go with his troubles or his joys, that the beautiful song of "Sweet Home" she whom he so devotedly loved had just sung, had no meaning for him except an inexpressibly sad one.

"Don't speak that way, Guy," implored Mrs. Hammersley, "as if you felt I had not room in my heart for two. You surely can't believe that I love you any less than I did when I first came into this place?"

"No, I can't say that, mother" (Guy half choked over the word, as if doubting his right to utter it), "but then I have no longer that *claim* on you that that

pretty little boy yonder has. But you haven't explained to me yet where he has been all this time, and why it was you thought he was lost to you forever."

Briefly Mrs. Hammersley detailed the facts with which the reader has already been made acquainted, concluding by stating that she must return at once to New York to get the photograph which would prove her right to the guardianship of her boy.

"But how can you do that?" broke in Guy. "You know we leave here in the morning for Columbus, where we are booked to give a concert to-morrow night."

"I cannot go," rejoined Mrs. Hammersley in firm tones. "That is all there is about it. This matter is of vital importance to me and must be attended to."

At this instant there was a hasty knock at the door and Colonel Starr presented himself.

"Hammersley," he said, addressing himself to Guy, "we are waiting for you."

There was no help for it. With his heart wrung by the new phase his life had so suddenly assumed, the boy was compelled to go through with another humorous recital. But luckily it was now late in the evening, so no encore was demanded, and as soon as possible Guy returned to Mrs. Hammersley's dressing-room.

Here he found his mother and the colonel engaged in a wordy war.

"I have your signature, madam, to my contract," the latter was saying, "guaranteeing me so many appearances, such contract not to be broken by either

party without two weeks' notice. You must either remain or pay a forfeit of \$500."

"But I must return to New York to-morrow night," insisted poor Mrs. Hammersly, who was all at sea in the world of business. "There's something in a trunk at a storage warehouse I must get, and no one else will be allowed to open it."

"They know me there, and I can get it for you, mother," spoke up Guy at this moment. "Let me go. I am not under contract, and besides, I shall never rest till I have vindicated myself of that charge. I have never been easy in my mind since I left New York. Now I can go back there and be serving you at the same time."

CHAPTER XIV.

BACK TO NEW YORK.

"AND am I not to be considered in these arrangements at all?" broke out Colonel Starr, when Guy had finished. "Who has given you leave of absence, sir?"

"I was not aware that it was necessary for me to ask for such," responded Guy, quietly. "As I said just now, I have made no contract with you, but in consideration of my leaving so suddenly, I will waive the right to receive any pay for to-night's services."

The colonel consented to be mollified by this concession, and so it was settled that Guy should return to New York by the first train the next morning. From Mrs. Hammersley he took money enough to pay his railroad fare, but could not be prevailed upon to accept a cent more.

"No, mother," he said, "there is no knowing how you may be situated. You know I do not trust Colonel Starr. By the way, has he made any settlement for to-night's performance?"

"No. I didn't think to ask him about it. Should I? Is it time?"

"I will speak to Ward about it," said Guy.

So when the four met in the hotel parlor for a few minutes, to talk over the performance before separating to their rooms, Guy drew young Farleigh aside and said: "The colonel led us to understand that a settlement would be made after each evening's entertainment. Has he said anything to your sister about it to-night?"

"No, not till I jogged his memory about it," replied Ward. "And then how much do you think he told me would be Ruth's share?"

"I couldn't guess, but it ought to be a good deal, for the house was just packed."

"That's where you're wrong. Ten dollars is all that is coming to her!"

"Ten dollars!" whistled Guy. "Why, there's some mistake, or else he's deliberately cheated you, as he will us. Didn't you make a fuss about it?"

"Trust me for that. I declared that the size of the house spoke for itself, and that my sister ought to have a hundred dollars as her share of the receipts at the very least. Oh, you know I'm not afraid of the colonel, Hammersley, and I just reared around that box office while Ruth was getting dressed, till I got him pretty mad, I can tell you."

"Well, and what explanation did he give?" demanded Guy, breathlessly, who, for his mother's sake, had a vital interest in the matter.

"Why, he told me that two thirds of the house was 'papered,' let in free, because it was the first night and he wanted to get a good 'send off,' as he called it. Well, there's one consolation about it,"

added Ward with a funny little groan, "he can't have a first performance twice."

"But he's equal to trumping up some other excuse to keep us out of our rights," rejoined Guy. "I don't believe half he tells me, and I'll venture to say he's cleared a big thing by to-night's performance. One of the men about the theatre told me that Brilling was his native town, and that everybody was anxious to see what sort of a show he could get up."

"I suppose that's the reason he opened here," returned Ward, "but I say, old man, what's this I hear about your going back to New York in the morning?"

"It's true; and I'm awfully glad the opportunity has come. Perhaps you'll know some day why I feel so. I don't mind telling you now, though, that I haven't been myself since you've known me."

"I've noticed one thing," returned Ward, "and that is that you've seemed livelier since you've made up your mind to go back to New York. But I shall miss you terribly, Hammersley. I'll have nobody with whom I can rake the colonel over the coals."

"You can do it with me by letter if you will. As soon as I get settled I'll let you have my address, and then I wish you'd let me hear from you now and then, and tell me how things are going. You know mother isn't as distrustful of the colonel as I am, and her accounts of matters are apt to be glossed over for the sake of avoiding rows. There, she wants me, and we'll probably sit up late talking over plans, so don't lie awake for me. Good-night."

It was late when Guy and his mother—for as such

she insisted that he must still regard her—separated after that final interview preparatory to his departure.

“But, Guy, why won’t you let me give you some money beyond your traveling expenses?” she pleaded. “You will have your board to pay, and may not succeed in getting anything to do for some time.”

“Well, is that any reason I should burden you with my support?” returned Guy. “Other boys, younger than I, have made their way in great cities without assistance from their friends. Besides, I know how reduced your stock of money is, and that your expenses will necessarily be heavier with Harold to care for, to say nothing of the cost of the steps you must take to prove that he really belongs to you.”

“But what if you are not able to obtain a position, Guy?”

“Don’t fret about that. Didn’t I get one at the shoe store within twenty minutes after I lost my first one?”

“But you lost that one before the day was over.”

“That was only chance, Mr. Inwood happening to come in there. But I mean to do my best to clear away that stain on my name connected with that lost thirteen dollars. I know I didn’t steal it. Some one must have, and I mean to make it my business to find out who it was. First, though, I will go to the storage company and get that picture for you.”

“Stay at Miss Stanwix’s if she has room.”

Guy promised and then bade Mrs. Hammersley good-bye—for the train left so early in the morning

that he would not consent to disturb her then. There were thus left to him but very few hours of sleep, and these he could not utilize. His brain was all afire with the strange happenings of that night which had made him motherless, while still she to whom he gave that name lived.

But his reflections were not all tinged with melancholy. Mingled with them was an inspiring sensation of independence, of liberty to go back to the city where his fair fame had been sullied, and wrestle with fate till he had removed the blot. So he lay beside sleeping Ward through the remaining hours of darkness, building air castles such as youth only can construct.

Thus there was no danger of his oversleeping, and in the uncertain light of early morning he arose, packed his satchel, ate a hasty breakfast, got a sleepy porter to carry his trunk over to the station, and was soon whirling back upon the road, which, when he had sped over it the previous day, he thought he should not again traverse in that direction for many months.

The train was not crowded, and as soon as he was settled he proceeded to take account of stock, as it were. It did not take long to do this, unfortunately, for he found that he had but fifteen dollars all told.

“But I’ve heard of fellows who afterwards turned out to be millionaires, coming to New York with not a quarter as much money as that in their pockets.”

As the train went on and the day grew older, the cars filled up, and at last the only seat left was the one beside Guy.

"One would think they were all afraid of me," he said to himself, "or else had heard about my experience at the office of the *Fireside Favorite*."

Then for the want of something better to do he fell to wondering if the seat-mate that he must have before long would be a man or a woman.

"If I was the hero of a story book," he said to himself, "a wealthy merchant would come in at the next station, take a seat next me, pull a roll of bills out of his pocket as he takes out his ticket, which drops on the floor, and I pick up and restore to him instead of pocketing, to be rewarded by the offer of a twenty dollar a week position in the merchant's office."

Guy had just about added the finishing touches to this picture when the train drew up at the next station, and the only passenger to enter that car was a small boy of eleven or twelve, with fair hair, a pale but interesting face, and a carpet satchel so heavily laden that he could barely carry it. Staggering under his burden, he reached Guy's seat and dropped into it, quite exhausted.

But he was up again in a minute as a little girl's head appeared in the doorway, and a trembling voice cried out: "Good-bye again, Jack!"

"Oh, Tot, get off, quick! You will be killed," and the boy made a wild rush for the door.

Guy saw him take the little girl in his arms for one brief moment, then he disappeared with her for an instant, and, just as the cars moved off, he came back slowly, trying to look out at the station over the passengers' heads, and with a suspicious glitter in each eye.

CHAPTER XV.

JACK BRADFORD.

Guy's heart was touched by the sight of this very little fellow who was evidently setting out on a long journey by himself. For the moment he forgot his own trials and perplexities, and wondered if he could do nothing to throw a little brightness into the life of his seat-mate.

"Wouldn't you like to sit next the window?" he asked, presently, "I'd just as lief change places with you."

The grateful look that flushed the pale face of the boy amply repaid the older lad for the slight sacrifice involved in making the change.

"Thank you," the little fellow said. "You see I know all the country round here just as well, and I mayn't see it again for a long, long time. Look, off yonder! there are the woods where we go for nuts and Ben Wiggin fell out of a tree and broke his arm last fall."

"Did he?" ejaculated Guy, finding that he was expected to say something.

"Yes, and here's the river where we go swimming," went on the boy, pressing his face close

against the glass to catch a last glimpse of it as the train dashed across the bridge with the usual hollow rumbling "I came near getting drowned there last winter. I skated right into an air hole. I was getting awful cold when they pulled me out. Did you ever fall through the ice?"

Guy was compelled to admit that he had never afforded anybody the opportunity to make an heroic rescue; but another sort of ice being thus broken, the two boys, the big one and the little one, were soon chatting like old friends.

It did not take long to learn his companion's story. His name was Jack Bradford, he had lost his father and mother a month before, within a week of each other, and there was only his little sister Nellie and himself left. She had been adopted by the family of a kind neighbor, where Jack himself had been given a home till his Uncle John—for whom he had been named and who lived in New York—could be heard from.

"We hadn't seen him since I was a little baby," Jack explained, "and almost the last thing papa said was that I must have his advice. So Mrs. Wiggin wrote to him, but there didn't any answer come for ever so long, because you see we didn't know exactly where to send the letter. When uncle got it though he wrote back and said he was porter in a big Japanese store on Broadway, and that if I'd come on to New York he could get me a place as cash boy there at two dollars a week, an' I could live with him an' Aunt Louisa. But it was awful havin' to leave Nellie behind. I'm goin' to work dreadful hard though, an'

perhaps some day I can make enough to have her come on to New York and live with me."

"What a brave, hopeful little chap it is," Guy said to himself, and contrasting his own lot in life with that of his seat-mate, he took courage and felt that the outlook for him was not so dark as it might have been.

When they reached Harrisburg and changed to an express train they took dinner together, and Guy gave Jack his own lighter satchel to carry while he took the heavy one, and then they found seats together again in the other train, for Guy could not now afford to travel in the Pullmans. Jack never having been away from home before was intensely interested in everything he saw, and not till it grew dark did he let his head fall back and drop off to sleep.

The train was due in New York at 9.20 P. M., and here Jack expected his Uncle John to meet him at the upper ferry.

"You don't know what he looks like, do you?" asked Guy as they left the boat.

"No, but he said he'd be looking out for a little boy with a big bag, and there isn't any other on the train, so I can't miss him," returned Jack, confidently.

But he did miss him, nevertheless, and for the very good reason that Mr. John Bradford was not there. Jack's face grew lengthy as he stood there under the sizzling electric lamp, holding his heavy bag, which he would not let Guy take for fear, without this means of identification, his uncle would pass him over. Everybody went off across West Street and was

swallowed up in the darkness ; only a few cabmen were left, too sleepy to insist that Guy should avail himself of their services. Another boat came in, and still no Mr. Bradford.

"Don't wait," said Jack, trying not to let the lump in his throat make his voice tremble. "I don't want to keep you."

"You don't suppose I'd go off and leave you alone in a strange city, do you?" rejoined Guy, giving the hand he held a reassuring pressure. Then he added : "Do you know where your uncle lives, or only the store address?"

"I've got the letter in my pocket," was the reply. "Maybe it's on there. I don't remember about it."

Jack dropped the bag for an instant while he felt for the letter, which Guy was soon endeavoring to spell out under the glare of the electric lamp. For Mr. John Bradford was doubtless a better porter than scholar, and, as a matter of fact, Jack surpassed him in both writing and spelling. After a little study Guy finally made out that the letter was written from one hundred and ninety something, West Sixty-Third Street.

"That must be near Tenth Avenue," he added, "so we can get in a car and ride straight up there. Come, I will go with you. Your uncle has probably been detained or else made a mistake himself in the ferry."

"Oh, will you do that?" cried Jack, overjoyed. "Do you know I think you're awful good. And just think, you didn't know me till nine o'clock this morn-

ing. Won't it be ever and ever so much out of your way?"

"No, because I don't know yet just where my way is," laughed Guy, for he knew it was now too late to get in at Miss Stanwix's that night, and had decided that he would take a room at some hotel. "Here comes a car now."

It was after ten when they got out at Fifty-Ninth Street and started to cover the remaining distance on foot. Jack was terribly sleepy, and Guy himself pretty well worn out. If he could only have foreseen that which lay before him and which was now so close at hand, all sense of fatigue would have been forgotten. On reaching Sixty-Third Street and finding the row of apartment houses which bore one-ninety as their predominating number, the problem presented for solution was which of these was the abode of the Bradfords.

Again Guy studied the letter from Jack's uncle, and finally concluded that the final figure was either a seven or a one, and as the one was nearer at hand he decided to try there first. But one difficulty was surmounted only to make way for another.

It was after ten o'clock, as has been said, and the outer door was closed and locked, cutting off access to the bells inside.

But Guy did not allow this to stand in his way long. Taking his cane, he tapped with it against the window on his left, belonging to the lower flat of the building, and through the shade of which the glow of gaslight made itself apparent.

A scream, half stifled, followed the rap, and then

the shade was run up, the sash raised, and a girl's head thrust out of the window.

She was about eighteen and rather pretty, but her face was spoiled by the evident knowledge she had of her attractions. Her hair was banged on her low forehead almost to her eyebrows, diamonds that must have been paste glittered in her ears, and a horseshoe breastpin gleamed in the gaslight from the street lamp at her throat.

But this lamplight which revealed her display of jewelry to Guy also shone full on his face, and he had scarcely time to make the observations set down above, when the girl cried out: "Oh, have pity on me, and don't give me up to the police. Come in quick, before an officer happens along, and I will confess, I will, truly."

For one brief instant Guy thought the girl must have lost her senses, then the meaning of it all came over him like a flash. He had seen her before. It was at the office of the *Fireside Favorite*, and the cause of her present terror was the belief that he had come to tell her he knew it was she who had stolen the thirteen dollars. Truly, his befriending of little Jack had brought him speedy reward.

The boy's eyes were round with wonder at these unaccountable proceedings, but he asked no questions, and in two minutes the door was opened, and the girl's voice in the hallway bade them come in.

So absorbed was Guy in the matter which so vitally concerned his own welfare, that for the time being he forgot all about the object that had brought him into the neighborhood, and neglected to make the

inquiry that had been on the tip of his tongue when he gave that lucky tap with his cane on the window pane.

"Come into the parlor here," whispered the girl, "and don't make no noise, for I wouldn't have father know for worlds."

She led the way into a room, with chairs stuffed with horsehair standing at stiff angles about the edge, a red and green carpet, a chromo of a girl holding a bunch of grapes over the mantelpiece, and an engraving of George Washington on horseback between the windows.

The girl closed the door by which they had entered, then did the same by one leading to the rear of the flat, and finally came up to stand in front of Guy and say in a pleading voice: "Tell me what you want me to do, only don't let them take me to jail."

CHAPTER XVI.

GUY FINDS THE THIEF.

"THEN it was you who stole that thirteen dollars from Mr. Inwood, and you knew that I was bearing the blame of it?"

Guy could not avoid giving a bitter ring to his tones as he stood facing the girl who had been the means of bringing upon him all the mental misery of the past few days.

"Why do you ask me that when you knew it and came here to taunt me with it?"

The girl had dropped into one of the horsehair chairs and sat rocking herself back and forth, with her hands over her face.

Guy was on the point of declaring that he had no such knowledge, but decided that such an admission might be an unwise one for him to make, so he walked over to the girl's chair, and, bending down, said softly :

"Why did you do such a thing? I am sure you are sorry for it, and, if you tell enough to clear me, I will do all I can to prevent their sending you to prison. But first you will have to tell me all about it."

"I will, oh, I will," half sobbed the girl. "It was all on account of these," and she touched one of the paste earrings. "I wanted them, an' didn't have the money. I was foldin' papers right where I could look into Mr. Inwood's office, an' I saw that gentleman pay him some money that he laid right out on his desk, and then pulled down the lid an' went out. I'd never stole nothing in my life, an' didn't think of doin' it then, not till you come in an' walked into Mr. Inwood's room. I didn't see you till just as you were comin' out, and then I thought how I could take the money an' you'd get the blame. Oh, I know it was dreadful wicked, and I've suffered more'n I've enjoyed the earrings. I'll work my fingers to the bone, too, an' pay back the thirteen dollars, if you'll only keep me from bein' sent to jail."

"But you must tell Mr. Inwood about this," returned Guy. "You must clear me. I've come back to New York to see that this blot on my name, placed there so unjustly, was removed. Will you promise to do that to-morrow morning as soon as you get to the office?"

"Oh, I don't work there any more," answered the girl, a tinge of red coming into her sallow cheeks. "I'm going to be married. Won't it do if I write it, and say I'll send the money?"

"If you'll do it now, right away, it will, and let me have the paper," answered Guy, who, on reflection, decided that he had better not lose sight of the real culprit for a moment till he had that in his hand which would clear him to the satisfaction of Mr. Inwood and Mr. Fox.

"I ain't much at writin'," admitted the girl, as she took a pen and a bottle of ink from the mantelpiece, "but I'll do the best I kin."

"I'll tell you what to say," suggested Guy, and then ensued a great search for a sheet of paper, which was finally found in the back room.

At last the girl seated herself at the marble-topped table between the windows, from which she had first carefully removed the wax flowers in their glass case, Then Guy began to dictate :

"This is to certify that I——"

Here he paused and inquired her name.

"Do you mean what it is now or what it will be next month?" she looked up to ask, with the nearest approach to a giggle she had given during the interview.

"Your present name, of course," answered Guy ; and considerably abashed by his manner of receiving her request, she murmured faintly :

"Lottie M. Crapfel."

"That I, Lottie M. Crapfel, took from Mr. Inwood's desk the thirteen dollars which Guy Hammersley was unjustly accused of appropriating, and will return the same as speedily as possible."

"Is that all?" demanded the girl, looking up anxiously, when, with many suggestions from Guy as to the spelling of the long words, she had completed the above confession.

"All except signing your name at the bottom," answered Guy, "and putting your address and the date."

"But there ain't nothin' about my not bein' sent to jail," she objected.

"Oh, I'll attend to that," Guy assured her. "They didn't send *me* there, and I didn't even confess. I'll take this down to Mr. Inwood in the morning, and will say all I can in your favor. I'm very much obliged," he added, as he picked up the paper, folded it, and placed it in his breast pocket.

"Obliged? What for?" echoed the girl in surprise.

"Why, for clearing my name in this way. Of course it was your duty to do it, but I can't help but feel grateful. And now I will say good-night, but I mustn't forget to ask you first the question that brought me here. I want to know if John Bradford lives in this house."

The girl dropped the pen with which she had been toying, and sprang to her feet.

"An' is that all you knocked on the winder for?" she asked, her breath coming hard and fast, while her eyes fastened themselves on the pocket where Guy had bestowed the confession as though she had the intention of making a spring to recover it.

"Yes," truth compelled Guy to admit. "You see, this little boy here," turning to Jack, who, during the writing of the letter, had fallen asleep in the rocking-chair, "wants to find his uncle, and we were not sure of the number, so——"

"And then you didn't know I took that money till I told you just now?" cried the girl, in as loud tones as she dared use without fear of awakening whoever might be in the back room.

"I knew it as soon as you screamed and begged me not to send you to jail," confessed Guy, wishing with all his heart that he had postponed inquiring about

the Bradfords till he got outside. He could easily have found some one about to give him the information he wanted.

"Then I gave myself away, and you basely took advantage of my innocence to worm that confession out of me. If you are the gentleman you look to be, you will take it out of your pocket and tear it into a hundred pieces before my eyes."

Guy stared at the girl thunderstruck.

"Why, if I should do that," he retorted, "Mr. Inwood would still believe that I was the one who took his money."

"Well, you are a man," persisted Lottie Crapfel, "and ought to be willin' to bear the blame to shield a woman. And then you tricked me into makin' that confession."

"Tricked you! You did it of your own free will. If I should give it back, I would be guilty of permitting you to act a falsehood, if not to tell one. Besides, you just now informed me that the memory of your act was a burden on your conscience."

"But then I didn't know you had deceived me in this way," returned the girl, utterly unabashed by the hollow nature of her reasoning.

Guy saw that the only thing to do under the circumstances was to put on a stern front and refuse to be moved in the least by her pleadings, which, aroused merely by the realization of the fact that she had betrayed herself, lacked the force they might have had but for this circumstance.

"No, Miss Crapfel," he said, "it would be fair neither to you nor myself to undo the good deed you

have just done. It has only been your plain duty, and after you have a chance to think it over calmly you must come to look at it as I do."

"Oh, of course you can look at it calmly. You're in luck, and I'm not. Won't you give it back to me? See, I'm on my knees in front of you."

Poor Guy! He was in frightful case indeed. His natural impulse for the sake of peace was to give the paper back, but he felt as he had said that this would not only be unjust to himself, but would be harmful to the girl. And yet how was he to convince her of this? He had tried to do so already, and failed.

"Lottie, what does all this mean? What do you want given back to you, and who is this young man?"

The door leading to the rear apartment had opened suddenly, and a man of about sixty, in a long wrapper, stood on the threshold.

The girl gave one terrified glance upwards, then, with a piercing scream, fell forward on the floor. Jack jumped out of his rocking-chair as if a bombshell had exploded under him, and ran to Guy for protection. Mr. Crapfel hastened to raise his daughter from the carpet, and he had barely placed her on the sofa when hurried steps were heard in the corridor, the door was thrown open, and a crowd of terrified tenants rushed in.

"What's the matter?"

"Where's the fire?"

"Who struck the gal?"

"Send for the police."

These were only a few of the excited exclamations that reached Guy's ear, as the little room filled with

the Crapfels' neighbors, most of the men in their shirt sleeves, and a few of the women with their hair done up in curl papers. Oh, why had he made that luckless remark about John Bradford, he asked himself amid the din?

CHAPTER XVII.

A PRECIOUS DOCUMENT.

FINALLY Guy managed to make his way to Mr. Crapfel's side.

"Send those people away," he said, "if you can. Then we can have an explanation in private."

But this suggestion was by no means an easy one to carry out. The neighbors had flocked to the spot eager to be in at a sensation, and now, when they were informed that there was nothing at all the matter, and that they would promote the peace of the Crapfel fireside by retiring at once, they were loath to go. They broke up into knots, and began to discuss the affair with meaning noddings of the head and elevation of the eyebrows, and such insinuations as "Where there is so much smoke there must be fire."

Mr. Crapfel, however, was a man very set in his ways, and when he had carried his daughter into the back room and returned to place his hands on the shoulders of one or two inquisitive youths and propel them into the hallway with an emphatic "There!" some of the ladies took fright, and with whisperings of "The old man's lost his mind; you

may be sure that's the trouble," beat a precipitate retreat.

In five minutes the room was cleared of all save Guy and Jack, and Mr. Crapfel was about to remove the latter in the summary fashion already described, when Guy broke in with :

"He is with me, and we will go at once if you will first speak to your daughter and ask if she wishes to see me."

"But I do not understand," mused Mr. Crapfel, dropping into a chair and beginning to mop the perspiration from his forehead with a bandanna handkerchief. "You are a stranger to me, and——"

At this moment the girl Lottie pulled aside the curtain that separated the parlor from the rear apartments. Her face was as pale as the handkerchief she held tightly clinched in her hand.

"It is about something that happened while I was at the *Fireside* office, father," she said, in clear, resolved tones. "This young man was blamed for it, when it was all my fault. I wrote him out a paper that would clear him, and—and wanted to get it back. But I will only have peace if he keeps it."

She dropped the curtain again, leaving Guy and her father looking at one another mutely.

The old man was the first to speak. He drew a heavy sigh and shook his head sadly from side to side, as he gave Guy his hand.

"It is mournful business, young man," he said, "when a father must believe that a daughter has—has taken what is not hers. But, poor child, it is an affliction. Even as a little tot she couldn't keep her

hands off other people's things. She thinks I don't know, but I do."

Guy knew not what to answer, nor how to console the poor old man. But he wrung his hand with a pressure that he meant to express sympathy, and then added : "One thing before I go, the question that brought me here to-night, in fact : Does Mr. Bradford live in this house ?"

"No ; it is two doors west from here, the second flat."

"Thank you ; good night," and taking Jack, now almost dead from sleep, by the hand, Guy hastily departed.

And as he got out into the pure night air and saw the stars twinkling down so peacefully, he thought of the precious paper in his breast pocket, and hoped he was not selfish in giving way to the rush of gladness that swept through his heart. For his joy meant deep grief to the two inmates of the apartment he had just left. Still, in the case of one it might be a sorrow that would work out the fruit of repentance.

He said nothing to Jack about the strange scene of which the boy had been a witness. He hoped he had been too sleepy to pay much attention to it.

As they approached the doorway of which Mr. Crapfel had told them, they saw a man just ascending the steps. He turned his head as he heard their footsteps behind him.

"Quick, give me the bag," whispered Jack. "Maybe it's Uncle John."

With a smile in the darkness at the odd means of identification, Guy passed the heavier valise over to

his young companion, and the latter's sagacity was at once indorsed.

"By George, that must be the youngster now!" exclaimed the stranger; then, putting a fat forefinger under Jack's chin, he lifted up his face and asked bluntly: "Say, bub, is your name Jack Bradford?"

"Of course it is, and you're Uncle John," cried the delighted boy. "I knew you could tell me if you saw me lugging the bag."

"Bless my stars, you're as bright as your father was afore you, poor man. But how did you get up here without my seein' you, I'd like to know, when I went down to the ferry an' acrost to the other side to meet you?"

And this was how the uncle and nephew came to miss one another, Mr. Bradford having taken the time of reaching New York for the hour of arrival in Jersey City, and the two had doubtless passed one another in the middle of the Hudson River.

"I'm mortal much obliged to you, young man, for bringin' this youngster safe up here," said Mr. Bradford, touching his hat to Guy.

"Oh, it's a lucky thing for me I did," rejoined Guy, as he shook hands with Jack, and then insisted on doing the same with the uncle. "I hope you'll let me come and see you sometimes," he added. "I don't want to lose track of my mascot, for such Jack here has proved to be to-night."

Now neither Jack nor his uncle had the slightest idea of what a mascot was, but as Guy's tone implied that it was something very nice, they felt complimented accordingly, and Mr. Bradford declared that

they would consider themselves honored if "the young gentleman would condescend to pass an evening beneath their humble roof-tree."

Five minutes later Guy was aboard a Boulevard car riding down to the Grand Union Hotel, where he had decided to pass the night. The storage house where his mother's trunks were was close at hand, and he would be enabled to execute his commission there in the morning before going down-town.

He was afraid the act was somewhat childish, but he could not refrain from putting his hand for an instant every now and then against the pocket that held the paper which was to set him all right with Messrs. Inwood, Tretbar and Fox.

"I wonder how they will take it?" he found himself surmising, and, indeed, this problem of the future, coupled with the exciting happenings of the recent past, kept sleep from his eyelids till a late hour, in spite of the downy couch with which mine host of the Grand Union supplied him for the reasonable sum of one dollar.

The next morning he ate an eight o'clock breakfast in the café, glancing the while at the want columns of the *World* and *Herald*. He saw several possible openings, which he checked with his pencil, intending to look them up after his visit to the office of the *Fireside Favorite* and Fox & Burdell's.

"If I can't do any better I may be able to get back my place at the shoe store," he repeated; "at the same time I'd prefer something that wasn't so far away from a man's brain as his feet."

Leaving his hand luggage in the baggage room of

the hotel, he walked over to the storage building and spent about an hour there, and then returned to the hotel reading-room to write a brief letter to his mother, inclosing the photograph she wanted, directing the communication to the third town on the route of the concert company.

This duty attended to, he started for the office of the *Fireside Favorite*.

He paused for an instant before he pushed open the door at the head of the three flights of stairs. He knew what he should have to face inside, and when he finally entered, the dozen or more girls all stopped work, just as he had expected they would, and gazed at him with round eyes and mouths ajar.

"Would you please tell Mr. Inwood that Guy Hammersley would like to see him for a moment?" he said to the miss who finally managed to recover from her astonishment sufficiently to approach the railing. She was the one who had been set to watch him in Mr. Tretbar's room that afternoon, and as Guy recalled the circumstance his cheeks burned in spite of him.

He could see the advertising agent busily writing at his desk, and presently noted the annoyed expression on his face when the girl delivered her message. He did not send word for his caller to come in, but, springing to his feet, came out to the railing with a frown on his forehead, and his pen held suspended between his fingers, as if to intimate that the interview must be extremely brief.

"Well, sir," he demanded, in no gentle tone, "what brings you here?"

"To ask you to read this," replied Guy, in a voice which, by an effort, he made equally hard, and he passed over Lottie Crapfel's confession.

Mr. Inwood took it, and just as he began to read Mr. Tretbar appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DASH OF DISCOURAGEMENT.

THE publisher of the *Fireside Favorite*, as soon as he saw Guy, hurried forward, looking very black in the face. He had opened his mouth as if about to pour out the phials of his wrath on the head of him who dared show his face in the place again after the crime he had committed there. But he was checked by Mr. Inwood.

"Tretbar," said the advertising man, "look at this," and he handed him Lottie Crapfel's letter.

An expression of pained surprise and defeated malice spread itself over the countenance of the publisher as he scanned the few lines that proved him to have been in the wrong when he had asserted that his employees could not betray his confidence in them.

"Well," he snapped out, as he passed the letter back to Mr. Inwood, and "Well?" the latter repeated, turning to Guy.

The latter was growing exceedingly wroth.

"They haven't even the grace to beg my pardon for being mistaken," he muttered between his teeth. Then he said aloud: "I wish you would write out

a brief statement of the case which I can hand to Mr. Fox. I will wait here for it."

They both turned away without a word, and in three minutes Mr. Inwood came back with a scrawl of half a dozen lines, which he handed to Guy with the remark, "There, will that do?"

"Having received a confession from one of the girls employed in our office, we hereby exonerate the bearer from all charge of having appropriated the thirteen dollars.

"TIMOTHY J. INWOOD."

"Yes, that will *do*," responded Guy, with some slight emphasis, when he had finished the perusal of the foregoing. "And now, before I go, I must fulfill a promise I made to the girl who wrote out that confession."

"I suppose you hunted her to the death to wring it from her," snarled the advertising agent.

"On the contrary," rejoined Guy, "it was by the merest chance that I encountered her, and it was her own accusing conscience at seeing me that impelled her to a betrayal of herself. I told her that I would do my best to induce you not to prosecute her, which request I now most earnestly make of you. Good-morning," and without giving the other a chance to reply, Guy hurried off; nor did he breathe unrestrainedly till he reached the street door.

"I think they two would take the prize for the meanest men in the country," he told himself. "Now if Mr. Fox seems disappointed when he learns he has misjudged me, my faith in male humanity will be sadly shaken."

It was just twelve o'clock when he reached the familiar spot, and the doors were opening and shutting almost ceaselessly to admit the vanguard of hungry business men.

"I wonder if they've got anybody in my place," reflected Guy as he entered, and irresistibly his eyes sought the counter where he had been stationed. Yes, there was a sallow-faced youth, with reddish hair, in attendance upon it, and Guy did not know whether to feel disappointed or relieved. Of course he would like to secure a position at the earliest possible opportunity, but then he had never been in love with his duties at Fox & Burdell's.

"Why, hello, Hammersley, how are you?" said the cashier, extending his hand as Guy approached the desk.

This greeting was certainly in refreshing contrast to the reception accorded him at the *Fireside Favorite* office, and the boy's heart warmed at once.

"How are you, Scott?" he rejoined, returning the pressure. "Is Mr. Fox about? I'd like to see him for a moment."

"Easy to accommodate you, for here he comes now."

Mr. Fox looked exceedingly surprised on seeing Guy, but the latter, with a simple "Good-afternoon, Mr. Fox," placed the communication from Mr. Inwood in his hand, and then withdrew a step or two to give him time to read it.

"I congratulate you with all my heart," exclaimed the restaurant proprietor, cordially, the next instant, as he gave Guy his hand. "Come back in the office with me."

Here Hammersley briefly related how he had secured the confession of the real culprit, and Mr. Fox appeared to be genuinely sorry that he could not take him back.

"But I'll give you a first class recommendation," he added, "and as soon as I have a vacancy I'll send for you, and give you the first chance if you haven't got a better place."

This was certainly treatment in most grateful contrast to that which had been meted out to him at Mr. Tretbar's establishment, and when Guy sallied forth ten minutes later to call at the first address on his list of possible positions, his spirits rose higher than is usually the case with those who start out on such a quest.

This first marked advertisement took him to a lawyer's office in a big Broadway building, and after riding clear to the top floor in the elevator, he was met by the announcement that they had hired a boy five hours before.

"But I ought to expect that," Guy told himself, "at this time of day."

Nevertheless he resolved to go through his list. Other firms might not be so easy to suit, and then he disliked the idea of passing another night without more settled prospects for his future. The next address took him over to Park Row, where a "Mr. Hiram Ballard wanted a youth of 17 to 18 to assist in store."

"That surely strikes me off as to age," reflected Guy, as he made his way with some difficulty along the crowded sidewalk, past the imposing news-

paper buildings, in front of the bustling entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge, and between rows of importunate street fakirs, till he came to the designated number. And glancing in at the window to see the nature of the business, he recoiled in a sort of horror for it was a pawnbroker's shop.

"No, no, not there," he said to himself, as he turned and hurried away; and then, as he realized what slow progress he was making, he could not but add the reflection: "I may be compelled to resort there soon enough."

The third advertisement was that of Hampton & Pitcher, harness merchants in Chambers Street. A life size wooden horse, rigged out with specimens of the blankets, halters and so on, sold within, stood in front of the door. The smell of the leather recalled strongly to Guy his summers in the West when a boy, and he had owned a pony cart in which he used to drive about the shaded avenues of Glendale.

A man in a yellow duster came up to him as he entered, evidently under the impression that he had come as a purchaser.

"You advertised for a boy in this morning's paper," began Guy, upon which the other interposed with: "Yes; see Mr. Hampton in the rear office."

Cheered not a little by the fact that he was to get as far as the interview, Guy walked to the back of the store and accosted a youngish man, with very black hair, who was seated at a desk under a skylight.

"Yes, we do want a young man," was the prompt reply to his question. "We've had no end of appli-

cations for the position already to-day, but nobody suits. Have you had any experience with horses?"

"Yes ; both in riding and driving. I used to do a good deal of both up to a year ago."

"Well, that's encouraging," exclaimed Mr. Hampton, turning round in his revolving chair so as to fully face Guy, and motioning the latter to a seat. "To the best of my belief, none of the fellows that were in here this morning had ever ridden behind steeds any more spirited than the car horse. You see I want somebody to help show off harness as if he knew something about it, and to throw in bits of personal experience, if necessary, which may gain us a customer. We pay eight dollars a week for a start. Have you had any experience in business here in the city?"

"Yes, a little," Guy admitted, and he drew the letter he had received from Mr. Fox out of his pocket and handed it to the harness man.

The latter read it through and passed it back, with the remark: "A very strong recommendation, but if he thinks so much of you, how came he to let you go?"

"Owing to a very unfortunate occurrence," rejoined Guy, feeling that he was growing most uncomfortably red. "I was accused of something very unjustly, the guilty party afterwards confessed, and I was fully exonerated, but meanwhile Mr. Fox had replaced me with some one else."

"Umph!" Mr. Hampton leaned back in his chair, played a little tune on his teeth with his pen-holder,

and then asked : "What was the charge? Stealing money?"

"Yes," said Guy, and he was about to add the details, when Mr. Hampton rose from his chair.

"Never mind," he said. "You needn't take the trouble to explain. I'd rather not have anybody here who has even been suspected. Good-afternoon."

CHAPTER XIX.

HOMELESS.

"How very unjust!" was the comment that rose to Guy's, lips as he listened to Mr. Hampton's words; but he did not utter it. He knew it would have been neither becoming nor judicious to do so; there was nothing left for him but to bow to the man's decision, and get out of the place as soon as he could.

"Arthur May-Jones, commission merchant," was the next name on his list. His place was not far off, in Hudson Street, and he had advertised for "a young man to make himself generally useful." There was an ice cart backed up to the door when Guy arrived, and two men and a boy were assisting the ice man in piloting the cakes from the skid to the rear part of the store.

"I suppose that is one of the ways in which the young man is expected to make himself particularly useful," reflected Guy, and then approaching another man who stood in the doorway watching the others work with a look of supreme satisfaction on his face, he asked if they had been suited yet with an applicant in response to their advertisement in the *Herald*.

Before replying, the man, transferring the tooth-pick he had been nursing in the left corner of his mouth to the right hand side of that aperture, recrossed his legs, and after favoring Guy with a stare that took him in comprehensively from his derby hat to his well-blackened shoes, replied: "Yes, and unsuited, too."

Guy looked puzzled, and the other, first glancing over his shoulder to be sure that the boy at work with the ice cakes was just then in the rear of the store, went on to explain: "No style about him. Can take in ice well enough, but no good to go around and drum up trade. Will give him his walking papers to-night. Come back into the office and I'll talk with you."

Guy followed this rather peculiar individual to a room partitioned off from the store proper with glass, where he was invited to take a seat.

"Now, then," began the butter and cheese man, "have you had any experience in our line?"

"No, sir," answered Guy.

"What have you been doing lately?" was the next question.

Guy replied that he had been connected with the Starr Concert Company.

"Oh, indeed, you are a singer, then?"

Guy was obliged to admit that he was not, and then briefly explained that he had gone with the company simply because his mother was in it, and that he had left it to return to New York on business for her.

"Do you think you could adapt yourself to the

commission business and boom the sale of butter and eggs after soaring in the high realms of art?"

Guy smiled and said that he thought he could, and inquired into the duties he would be required to perform.

"Well, we might send you on the road to drum up trade among out-of-town customers after we got you worked in. Your salary to begin with would be seven dollars a week."

Guy was about to exclaim that he could not possibly live on that, but checked himself in time with a recollection of the fact that he must now adapt his living expenses to his income, not the latter to the former. So after a little further conversation it was agreed that he should come down ready to begin work on Monday morning, for it was now Saturday.

"And what are the hours, Mr. Jones?" Guy asked as he rose, scarcely realizing his good fortune.

The other made no reply for an instant, and Guy thought he even staggered backwards a step or two. Instinctively he turned his head to look towards the front of the store to see if anything had happened there to cause consternation in the mind of the proprietor.

But all seemed to be in smooth running order, and Guy was about to repeat his question, under the impression that the commission merchant had not heard it, when he was utterly astonished to hear the other say :

"To you, sir, there will be no hours in this establishment. I have no use for your services."

"Very good, sir," and putting on his hat, Guy took his departure without loss of time.

"The man must be weak in the upper story," he told himself when he reached the sidewalk. "I thought him a little queer when he first began to talk, but not enough so to change his mind so suddenly as he did just now."

In fact Guy was so perplexed by the circumstance that for a time he forgot to feel grieved over it or to recollect that "Arthur May-Jones" was the last name on his list. It was the sight of this name, as he paused to take a farewell glance back at the store in case the fickle proprietor should have again changed his mind, that gave to Guy a possible solution of the mystery.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated, "I believe I forgot the hyphen and called the name plain Jones, instead of May-Jones. That was the only time I used the name, I remember, just at the last. And he's just the sort of a man to make a mountain out of a mole-hill like that. Well, it wouldn't do any good to go back and apologize, so I suppose I must put it down as a lesson in experience, and try again."

And now it was on consulting his paper that he discovered that he had exhausted his list. Besides, it was well on toward three o'clock, and being Saturday afternoon, merchants were beginning to close their stores.

"And I haven't had any lunch either," he added to himself.

In the excitement of securing a situation, thinking that each fresh application might result in success,

he had not been sensible of hunger. Now, with the chase postponed necessarily until Monday, he felt himself overpowered with fatigue and weakness.

"I want a good meal," he muttered to himself with a mournful kind of smile, "just when I am least able to afford one. If I'd got a place and had a prospect of earning twenty dollars a week, say, I suppose I'd be so excited that I wouldn't have any appetite at all."

What to do next was now the question. There was his trunk still at the baggage room of the railroad company.

Never in his life had the poor fellow felt so desolate and unsettled. The very fact that he was walking along the street mechanically, not knowing whither he was going, actually sent a shiver through him as he realized it. He must do something, go somewhere, and feeling that a place for his trunk was the most pressing call upon him, he bent his steps toward an elevated station and took a train uptown, with the intention of calling on Miss Stanwix.

He was plunged deep in gloomy meditations, hanging on to a strap as the train pulled out from the Eighteenth Street station, when he suddenly felt somebody tugging at his coat, and a half hesitating voice calling his name.

He turned and saw Jack Bradford, his face radiant at the chance encounter.

"I've just come from the store," he told Guy when they had shaken hands, "and I like it ever so much. We close early on Saturday, you know."

Guy noted the evident pride with which the little

fellow brought out the "we" in his sentence, and although he tried honestly to rejoice in his good fortune, he could not but contrast their lots. All the way to Forty-Second Street the boy chatted gayly of the new life, and his happiness seemed actually to be contagious, for when Guy left him it was with the reflection that there must be many poor souls in that great city worse off than he was.

A short walk brought him to the house where he and his mother had passed the summer. A new maid opened the door for him. Yes, Miss Stanwix was in, she said, and soon that lady appeared in the parlor.

But when Guy asked if he could have his old room back, or another one, she smiled and shook her head.

"I haven't a single vacant apartment, Mr. Hammersley," she said. "My rooms are all let now to the first of June."

"Can you suggest a place where I might be able to get in?" inquired Guy.

"Well, I can't, not just now. You see we boarding-house keepers must look out for ourselves, and unless you can promise that you will stay till next summer, I am afraid you will have some trouble in getting just what you want. How did you leave your ma?"

Guy made appropriate answer and then hurried away, although why he should hurry he did not know. He had neither home nor occupation nor mother now as he recollected with an added pang.

CHAPTER XX.

A FRIEND WORTH HAVING.

"MR. HAMMERSLEY. Stop, please ; here's something for you."

Guy was half-way to the corner when he heard this cry behind him, and turning, he saw the servant from Miss Stanwix's running toward him with a visiting card in her hand.

"A young gentleman left this," she panted out, "the day after you went away. Miss Stanwix forgot about it till just this minute."

"Thank you."

Guy took the card with considerable curiosity, and saw that it belonged to Bert Arlington. On it were penciled these lines :

"They sent me here from the restaurant. If ever you get this come and see me at the Jura."

"There's a friend for you," reflected Guy, as he put the card carefully away in his pocket, "to chase me up in this persistent manner. I'll go and call on the boy this very evening. Perhaps he can give me some good advice."

It was wonderful what magical effect this little gleam of hope in his sky had upon the poor fellow's

spirits. It takes such a very little effort from a brother's hand to rouse us out of the slough of despond. If all did but realize this, these friendly services would be more common than they are.

The rest of the afternoon Guy spent in watching the driving on Fifth Avenue as he strolled up toward Central Park and back. And as he looked on at the gay procession he could not but recall the time when, during the Easter holidays, he had hired a dog-cart and taken his mother up through the Park to Kingsbridge and back. He recalled, too, how on that occasion, at one of the street crossings, he had been obliged to hold up his horse suddenly to avoid running over a young fellow of about his own age, who had started to cross the street at the last minute. The boy had looked up at him, seated aloft in his gay turnout, and even in the one instant that their eyes met Guy had detected the envious longing in the other's glance.

"Why, there he is now!"

Guy involuntarily uttered these words aloud as he saw the same boy. He could not mistake the light curling hair, drab overcoat and the intensely blue eyes. But what a complete reversal of their positions!

The fellow was driving a T-cart this afternoon with a beautiful girl on the seat beside him and a solemn-visaged groom, with arms crossed, behind.

"Well, that is typical of the ups and downs in American life with a vengeance!" thought Guy, as the team passed him, and then he seemed to lose his interest in the imposing cavalcade, and leaving Fifth

Avenue, sauntered slowly back to his hotel along the quieter streets.

He ordered an early dinner, for he feared to miss Arlington unless he called soon after seven. In fact, it wanted five minutes to that hour when Guy entered the lofty building in Thirty-Third Street devoted to bachelor apartments.

"Yes, I guess you'll find him upstairs," the man in the elevator said in answer to his inquiry. "He came in about ten minutes ago, and I haven't seen him go out since."

Guy got out at the fourth floor, pressed an electric button beside the door pointed out to him, and half a minute later found himself confronted by Arlington himself.

"Good for you, Guy," the latter exclaimed, insisting upon shaking both hands at once as he pulled his friend inside. "I'm no end glad to see you. I was just beginning to get lonesome."

"Why, that's queer," exclaimed Guy, as he gazed around at the comfortably furnished rooms, for there were two of them, separated by portières, and the windows looked out on two busy thoroughfares which crossed one another at this point. "I had an idea that you would never get that, knowing as many people as you do in New York."

"That's the very reason I'm so glad to see you to-night, old fellow," returned Arlington, as he disposed of Guy's hat and coat. "You see I'm going to be perfectly frank with you. I was booked for a bowling party to-night, but there's been an unexpected death in the family of one of the members of the

club, and the thing is off for two weeks. I hadn't made any other provision for the evening, of course, it was too late to do it after I got the telegram, which I found here ten minutes ago when I came in from dinner, you can't very well call on a girl Saturday night, I hate to go to the theater alone, and now you're here, I'm going to take you with me."

"But——"

"No buts unless you have a previous engagement. We'll walk down three blocks and hear De Wolf Hopper. Meantime I'll step out to the elevator and have my seats ordered and then come back to hear an account of yourself and doings."

Guy found it very pleasant to be taken possession of in this summary fashion, and when Bert returned, determined to satisfy his curiosity by giving a complete account of his adventures since he had seen him that noon in the early part of the week at Fox & Burdell's.

"Well, you *have* been through a lot in two weeks and no mistake," was Arlington's exclamation, when the narrative was concluded. "And now you're on the scent for a posish?" he added, as he slipped into the adjoining room to brush his hair.

"I am, very much so," answered Guy. "Do you happen to know of anything I could get?"

"Well rather," rejoined Bert, coming out, brush and comb in hand. "You're the very fellow, I take it, we want in our office."

"Your office?" echoed Guy in delighted surprise. "Where are you and in what line? You haven't told me anything about yourself yet."

"All right, I'll make up for it now, on our way to the theater. I've a good excuse for not having said much about it to you when I saw you before. I hadn't gone in it myself then. You see it's a new business just started by two fellows, both of them pretty young, friends of father's. It is real estate, renting houses, offices and all that, and our office isn't very far from here, around on Fifth Avenue. Business has come in with such a rush—both Mr. Kenworthy and Mr. Clarke are New York men and have hosts of friends here—that we are short-handed, and only this afternoon, just as I was coming away, Mr. Kenworthy asked me if I knew of a young fellow I could get in to assist. You see there's only himself, Clarke, the bookkeeper, the office boy and I now."

"And do you think I would suit?" asked Guy, eagerly, thinking the news almost too good to be true.

"I don't see why you shouldn't. You're a good appearing fellow—now don't blush, I'm merely talking business—dress well, can talk easily and——"

"But what have all these qualifications got to do with fitting me for a place in your office?" Guy wanted to know.

"A great deal. A good many of our customers are ladies, and they do not forget if they are waited on politely at a certain office, and in an off-hand, careless way in others. Then we often have to go with them to show houses, and sometimes three or four of us will be out at once, and then there's no one in the office that knows about things if anybody comes in. Oh, no fear but I can get you in, so make

your mind easy and settle down to a good enjoyment of the opera."

And Guy *did* enjoy that opera; and after it was over Bert took him to Delmonico's and then home to spend the night with him; and before church time next morning the second problem—that of lodgment—was settled for him most delightfully.

"Look here, Guy," said Bert, as they sat over their breakfast in the restaurant across the avenue from the Jura, "what's the reason we can't keep this thing up indefinitely?"

"What thing?" queried Guy, looking from the chops to the oatmeal dish and then up in his friend's face.

"Why, this thing of chumming it, to be sure. We used to get along at it all right at school, and I'm sure I'm having a good time now, so if you're willing I'd be delighted to have you chip in with me and go shares on my rooms at the Jura."

Guy drew a long breath.

"It would be just too——"

"Yes, just 'too, too,' so say I," laughed Bert.

"But I couldn't afford such style," added Guy.

"How do you know how much you can afford till you know how much Kenworthy & Clarke will give you?" interposed Bert. "Now listen. I'm sure they will start you on ten dollars a week, and raise you if you work well into the business. Now my rooms average me about that a week, but as I really expected to pay the whole of it—or rather father did for me—you see it will be money in my pocket if you'll pay me three a week. We can divvy on the

cost of our meals—it always comes cheaper for two—and so you ought to come out all right. What do you say to the idea?”

“Oh, I’d say yes every time. The question is, will the thing work smoothly in practice? I’m afraid it will be imposing on you and—and—perhaps living beyond my means. I might find a boarding-house where I could get everything for seven dollars a week.”

“The very thing! I’ll take you to board for that,” exclaimed Bert. “Then there’ll be no bothering about shares and all that, and you’ll know just how much you’ll have for spending money every week. Now don’t object. It suits me to do it, and will really be a favor, for I was getting most terribly lonesome, eating and living alone. Now on our way back I’ll take you past Kenworthy & Clarke’s and show you what a swell office we have.”

CHAPTER XXI.

BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.

Guy did not leave Arlington until late that evening, when he went back to the Grand Union to get the things he had left there. They had gone to church together, taken a long walk in the afternoon, and altogether Bert had given his friend a splendid time.

And yet, in spite of all, when Guy was by himself with an opportunity to think calmly over the development of events, he was not as contented in mind as he felt he should be.

"It does seem as if I was imposing on Bert to stay with him and enjoy all these privileges for only seven dollars a week. And yet, I cannot doubt that he is sincere in wanting me to do it."

For Guy had finally accepted the offer on two conditions : one that Kenworthy & Clarke engaged him at a salary of not less than ten dollars, and the other that a formal renewal of the arrangement should be made every Monday, in order to give Arlington an opportunity to cancel the privilege if he found it not so pleasant a one as he had anticipated.

"Yes, I'll consent to that," he had said, laughingly ; "it's no more than fair to you, for you may be the first one to want to draw out."

There was certainly a bond of sympathy between the two, for Bert's father was in the army, his mother was dead, and he had but few living relatives. Hence, Guy could readily understand that he might at times feel lonely, no matter how much his father's money could do for him.

Monday at nine o'clock the two repaired to the offices of Kenworthy & Clarke, which Guy found to be fitted up more like the private apartments of a millionaire than the counting-rooms of a business firm. Everything was in hard-wood finish, there were expensive rugs strewn about the floors, while electric lights, paintings on the walls and a frescoed ceiling added to the completeness of the establishment.

"There's an extra desk yonder you can have," said Bert, as he pushed back the top of his own. "Now sit down by me a few minutes till Mr. Kenworthy comes in. Then I'll introduce you. Here he is now."

A young man of about twenty-eight entered, tall, fine-looking and dressed as if for an afternoon promenade on the avenue. Guy was presented as a particular friend and old schoolmate of Arlington's. Mr. Kenworthy took him into his private office, and after a brief talk engaged him on the terms mentioned by Bert.

"Arlington will instruct you in your duties," said the senior partner in dismissing him, "and I think, judging from your looks and manner, that you will prove an apt pupil."

So it turned out. The business called for just

those qualities which Guy possessed in an eminent degree, and he very soon "got into the swing of it," as Bert expressed it. It was exceedingly pleasant work too, for escorting parties through houses to show off the premises broke the monotony of the day, and was the means of making Guy acquainted, even though it might be but for a brief hour, with some very agreeable people. Altogether it seemed as if our hero's evil star had sunk below the horizon and for a week or two there was nothing to molest him but news from the West.

This came from two sources, his mother and Ward Farleigh. The former had now her boy with her, as her proofs had been sufficient to convince Judge Dodge that she had the best claim upon him. Mrs. Hammersley was enraptured of course to regain possession of her son, but wrote that she felt grieved that she was compelled to take him away from such a luxurious home as he had had with the judge to offer him only the meager substitute of life upon the road.

"And Heaven alone knows how long I may be able to depend upon this," she wrote. "Things are going from bad to worse with the Starr Concert Company. The audiences seem large enough, but one time it is a papered house, another a thieving treasurer, and the latest a flooding with counterfeit money. Any way, whatever the reason, my eighth, as well as Miss Farleigh's, amounts to but three dollars or sometimes not that, for each performance. We have protested, and Ward has even threatened to leave, but it does no good. Law is expensive and

we have no other redress. The future indeed looks dark to me."

Guy was greatly distressed by this letter, and never wished for wealth so earnestly as he did at the moment of reading it. What inexpressible joy it would have been to him to be able to write: "Bring Harold and come on to New York. I will care for you both."

As it was, he could not even have the satisfaction of inclosing a few dollars with his reply. And yet he was, so to speak, living in luxury himself.

Ward's letters were made up principally of maledictions on Colonel Starr, who was "cheating them all out of their eye teeth," he wrote. "I'm trying to get Ruth and your mother to join me in a strike," he added. "We now compose the entire company, you know, and should we fail to appear there could of course be no concert. But Ruth and Mrs. Hammersley insist that as the colonel has always paid them something they cannot plead that he has broken his contract, and that, unless we can *prove* that he has misappropriated the funds, we can have no case against him. He is now trying to make an infant phenomenon out of that new young brother of yours. Found out he knew whole pages of 'Fauntleroy' by heart. The boy takes very kindly to the notion. I don't know whether his mother knows about it or not."

Three days later Guy was keeping office during a busy afternoon, when Bert and the two partners were all out showing houses. He had just finished dictating a letter to the typewriter when the street door

opened and in filed a procession that utterly astounded him.

First came Mrs. Hammersley, and with her Harold, then, Ruth Farleigh and Ward.

"We called to see if you could show us some flats," laughed the latter.

Mrs. Hammersley explained matters in a few words. The Starr Concert Company had collapsed, the gallant colonel had fled to parts unknown, and the members of the company found themselves left with but very little over what would pay their expenses back to New York.

"We thought this was the best place to come to," added Ruth. "Ward and I will be near a steamer when we have saved up money enough to pay our passage, and then your mother wanted to be near you."

"And we're really in earnest about the flat," continued Ward. "You see we've decided that it would be cheaper for us all to live together in this way than to board. Now do you know of any furnished flat we can get for about \$25 a month?"

Poor Guy was overwhelmed. His stepmother looked wan and careworn, and when he thought of the luxuries that had once been hers and contrasted that period with the present when she arrived in New York almost penniless and with a little boy dependent on her, he grew sick at heart to think of his own helplessness. But on one thing he resolved upon the instant; he would leave his luxurious quarters at the Jura and cast in his lot with the others. His salary of ten dollars a week would be a material help.

"I think it would be better if you came over to see us this evening, Guy," said Mrs. Hammersley, "and then we could discuss matters more fully."

Guy himself thought this the better plan and arranged to call as soon as business would permit. He thought of how vexed Bert would be when informed of his intentions and was, therefore, much comforted to receive his friend's expressions of hearty sympathy and assurance "that whatever came up, he would stand by him."

CHAPTER XXII.

A DARK OUTLOOK.

AFTER dinner that night, what Ward called a "committee of the whole" met in his room to consider ways and means.

"Particularly means," he added, jingling a few loose coins in his pockets suggestively. It was a characteristic of this frank, good-natured English lad to be always in buoyant spirits, no matter how dismal the outlook. So now he endeavored to gild the sore straits in which they found themselves with the brightness of a little fun.

"Well, then," began Guy, "in the first place you can count on my ten a week. I've seen Bert and arranged with him to leave as soon as we can find a flat. And now what is the utmost we can afford to pay for an apartment?"

"That will depend on the size of it," rejoined Ruth. "How small a one can we get along with, do you think, Mrs. Hammersley?"

"Not less than four rooms, surely," was the reply. "You see there are five of us. One room must be kitchen, the other we can use for both par-

lor and dining-room. Guy and your brother can occupy one bedroom, where we can have a cot for Harold, and you and I can take the other. How do you like the arrangement?"

"First class," exclaimed Ward. "Reminds me of that trick in cards where the landlady has seven rooms and eight travelers to provide for. But we can get along in the way Mrs. Hammersley has mapped out admirably unless company insists on staying till it is time to set the table for dinner, when of course they'll see it, and we'll have to ask 'em to stay when perhaps we can't afford it. But now we've got our specification as to space, let Guy here, the young real estate king, tell us how much we ought to pay for it."

"Well, for a furnished flat of that size, in anything that isn't a tenement house, we'll have to give not less than twenty-five dollars a month, and more likely it will be thirty or thirty-five. Any way, you can reckon on my forty dollars covering that."

"But we're not going to let you pay all the rent," cried Ruth and Ward in a breath. "It wouldn't be fair."

"Certainly it would," replied Guy. "I don't see why not, if the rest of you have to pay for the provisions, coal, washing and gas. You'll find that these will mount up to more than forty a month rather than less."

Even Ward looked a little blank on hearing this. Where was the other forty to come from, he could not help wondering?

"Now we must take an account of assets, do they

call it?" proposed Ruth, and, suiting the action to the word, she drew her purse from her pocket and proceeded to reckon up how much she had in it.

Fourteen dollars and thirty-nine cents was the result. Ward's pockets turned out twenty, and Mrs. Hammersley found that she could contribute thirty one dollars to the general fund, while Harold insisted on adding the gold eagle that Judge Dodge had given him as a parting gift when he left Brilling.

"That makes \$75.39 cash in hand," announced Guy, who had been busy with pencil and paper. "Guess we won't need your eagle, after all, Harry. You'd better save it up for a still rainier day."

"Do you suppose we can get into a place some time to-morrow?" Ruth wanted to know. "Our bill at the hotel will eat a hole in our resources, you must remember."

"I'll do my best," answered Guy. "And one thing we must take into account: the month's rent will have to be paid in advance. I forgot about that when I undertook to attend to that part of it. I'm running only about a dollar or two ahead of expenses, you know. But I'll save up for the second month, and be all right after that. Now, mother, have you any idea how much we'll need for living expenses?"

"Well, I don't see how five people can get along on less than fifty dollars a month, ten dollars apiece."

"There, I knew you'd want my eagle," put in Harold, who was looking over Guy's shoulder while the latter figured. "If you allowed thirty dollars

for the rent, you'd have only thirty-five left for the rest."

"But there's Guy's forty, my dear," interposed Mrs. Hammersley.

"Yes, but he's got to save that up for the second month's rent," rejoined the boy, and with a little air of triumph he plumped the gold coin on the table again.

"That will give us only forty-five," remarked Guy, adding immediately, however: "But then all of my forty will not be needed for rent, so you see we will come out all right, after all."

It was then arranged that Ward should call around at Kenworthy & Clarke's the next morning to ascertain the result of Guy's interview on flats with Mr. Clarke. The party then separated for the night, Guy returning to the Jura feeling as though he were a married man weighed down by the cares of a large family.

On applying to the junior partner the next day, he was given by Mr. Clarke a note to a friend of his who made a specialty of small apartments, and when Ward arrived the two went off to obtain a batch of permits. But they found that the choice among furnished flats was exceedingly small; indeed, when the question of price was taken into account, there wasn't any choice left, a thirty dollar suite of four rooms on the top floor, in Harlem, being the only item that filled their bill.

"Well, I suppose there's nothing for it but to get the others and go up and see it," said Ward, which was accordingly done.

The ladies groaned in spirit on the threshold when they beheld the narrowness and steepness of the stairs, but the rooms were sunny, and, although the furniture was plain, everything was neat and clean. They had been occupied by a Southern gentleman and his wife. He had been ordered South for his health, and they were anxious to start as soon as possible, and readily acquiesced in Mrs. Hammersley's wish to move in at once.

So the thirty dollars was paid over, a cot purchased for Harold—the rooms were large, so that there was plenty of space for it in Guy's and Ward's apartment, and it could be folded up and placed under the bed in daytime—and by six o'clock that night "the assorted family," as Ward dubbed them, were established in their new quarters.

They were very merry that first night. Ruth could cook as well as she could play the violin, and Harold greatly enjoyed shopping for dinner and breakfast with his mother. Mrs. Maddern, the former tenant, had left her piano, and when the dishes were washed and put away, Ruth got out her violin, and with Ward for accompanist and Mrs. Hammersley as *prima donna*, they gave a little impromptu concert for their house warming.

It was certainly very cozy when you once got inside. There were rugs on the floors, which had been stained a dark red, and some good engravings on the walls, while a general supply of books scattered about gave an air of refinement and culture to the rooms.

Mrs. Maddern had been forced to leave behind her

a great yellow cat, which boasted the grandiloquent name of Emperor, and with him Harold soon made friends, and when he discovered that the cat would jump over his hands, the boy's content seemed complete.

But with the others it was different. They might laugh and joke, and declare that they were in great luck to secure such pleasant quarters, but beneath it all there was an undercurrent of doubt that was like the worm in the bud. Ward was the first to put the dark side of the picture into words.

It was long after they had retired, when, noticing a restless motion of Guy's, he ventured to whisper: "I say, Hammersley, aren't you asleep either?"

"No; I've been wondering whether you were," was the reply.

"The boy's off, isn't he?"

"Long ago. I've been thinking."

"About next month?"

"Yes."

"So have I. 'Tisn't a particularly cheerful outlook, 'specially for me. What if I don't succeed in finding anything to do?"

"Oh, but you will. What are you up in particularly in the business line?"

"Nothing; that's the trouble. I left school to come out here with Ruth, you know. Besides, even supposing I get a place, I surely can't expect the good fortune you've had, and will be lucky to be paid five dollars a week. Multiply that by four, and you have twenty dollars a month for living expenses. Amount wanted: fifty."

"But you must remember that there'd be ten left from my income."

"Yes; but that will still leave a gap of twenty to be filled. Besides, I haven't got my situation at five a week yet, and maybe I won't ever have it. Ruth has great hopes of getting something to do, but it is so late in the season now I'm afraid there's not much show for her in the concert line, and I've put my foot down on her going into a store. Then, you must remember, our clothes won't last forever, and we haven't counted the cost of these in our estimates at all."

Guy was obliged to admit that they had not, and then there was silence in the apartment, broken only by the regular breathing of Harold, who was sleeping peacefully, while his older room-mates were both lying there wide-eyed over the problem of existence.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WARD ATTEMPTS JOKE MAKING.

DURING a good part of the next day Guy's thoughts were more distracted than they should have been perhaps from his work. He was kept constantly wondering what success the other members of the little household in Harlem would meet with in their quest for employment. For his mother had decided to call on Dr. Pendleton, taking Ruth with her, while Ward was to answer certain advertisements he had cut out of the morning paper. It may be believed, therefore, that when the young real estate clerk took the elevated train home at five o'clock, he was possessed of a feverish impatience to hear the result of their efforts.

Two steps at a time he ascended the long flights of stairway, eager to burst into the cosy apartment with a cry of "Well, what cheer?" But on the top landing stood Harold, one finger laid across his lips, while with the other hand he motioned for his half-brother to tread lightly.

"Why, what's the matter?" whispered Guy, his heart fairly springing into his throat.

"It's mamma," replied the boy. "She was taken

sick this morning soon after you went away. I couldn't go to school because I had to run out and hunt up a doctor, and then go off to the drug store two or three times. Miss Farleigh has had to be with her all day."

Guy hurried in and met Ruth in the parlor. She looked wan and anxious.

"The doctor says it is a general break down of the system," she answered in response to Guy's eager questionings. "She must have careful nursing and the most nourishing diet. Yes, you can see her."

When Guy came back to the parlor, which had now become the dining-room, for Harold had begun to set the table, he found Ward there. One glance at his face was sufficient to show that his day's quest had been a fruitless one. While they were eating dinner he told in lowered tones his experiences.

"In the first place," he began, "almost every place I went to had already engaged a boy, and others that hadn't when they found out that I was a stranger in New York, said I wouldn't do at once. By that time I had got down to the bottom of my list, where I had put the doubtful ads, those that promised big profits for little work, and which, as I suspected, turned out in every case to be baits for book agents. As I haven't had myself padded against assaults from American boots, I said I'd think about it, and got out as quick as I could."

Ward tried to make light of his failure for the sake of the others, asserting that he meant to work on different lines on the morrow.

"You ought to get a Sunday paper if you want

a long list of advertisements to select from," suggested Harold. "I found one the Madderns left here. Would you like to see it?"

"Yes, trot it out. The more the merrier."

So Harold brought the paper, but none noticed at the time that one particular sheet he separated from the rest, folded it up and stuffed it into his pocket. Ward took the paper and immediately became absorbed in its perusal. But Guy remarked that he was not reading the "Help Wanted—Male" pages, and was therefore considerably surprised when the British youth suddenly brought one hand down on the table with an emphatic slap and exclaimed: "I've got it. That's the easiest way to make money I've heard of yet!"

"Hush, my dear brub, not so loud," cautioned Ruth, with a glance toward the sick chamber. Then she added: "What is that easy way of making a fortune you have discovered?"

"Writing jokes for the comic papers," answered Ward. "Here's an article telling all about it. And only think! For just a little bit of a dialogue of two lines sometimes, a man gets a dollar. It can't take more than five minutes at the most to scribble off one of these. Now in a working day of eight hours there are—I say, Harold, you're just fresh from school, how many five minutes are there in that length of time?"

"Ninety-six," answered Harold, after an instant of mental calculation.

"Good," went on the enthusiastic Ward, his face flushing with the inspiration of hope. "A dollar

apiece for the product of each of these would be——”

He hesitated for an instant, and then Guy added, with a little laugh: “Ninety-six dollars a day. At that rate I wonder why some Wall Street brokers don’t change their business. They would certainly get rich faster than a great many of them do now.”

“Oh, of course I don’t suppose one could think of a new joke every five minutes in the day,” rejoined Ward, looking a trifle silly as he realized to what lengths his enthusiasm had carried him. “I just wanted to show you what possibilities there were in the scheme. I think I’ll begin to-night, so I’ll have something to fall back on in case I don’t succeed in getting a regular place to-morrow. Of course tramping about all day trying to get a situation isn’t just the best sort of preparation to set the mind in trim to reel off funny things, but then I don’t want to get in the habit of waiting for moods to write. I wonder if I can find any paper to write on in this establishment?”

Harold brought him some, and while Guy picked up the advertising sheet of the journal he had cast aside, Ward took out his lead pencil, and, propping his head on his arms, which rested on the table, wrinkled his brow and looked terribly serious in the effort to be funny. One, two, three minutes passed, and still he remained in the same position, with not one word as the result of his deeply severe thinking.

A quarter of an hour later Ruth, who had gone in to see if Mrs. Hammersley wanted anything, returned, and, looking over her brother’s shoulder,

said, in her cheerful way : " Well, Ward, how many jokes have you reeled off by this time ? "

" None," the boy was compelled to answer, adding, honestly : " It isn't quite as easy as I thought it was. But I don't believe I set to work the right way. Most of the jokes are about common, every-day things and happenings, so perhaps I'd get along faster if, instead of trying to concentrate my thoughts on the gray matter in my brain and look at nothing, I just sat quietly and gazed about the room till my eye lighted on something to which I could hang a joke. "

Suiting the action to the word, Ward transferred his glances from the ceiling to the various objects around the apartment. Suddenly they rested on puss, asleep at Harold's feet, and instantly the joke maker's lips began to move noiselessly. It was evident he had hit on an idea, and was struggling to give it expression.

" It doesn't fit as pat as I hope to make it after a little polishing," he said, when he had scribbled a few lines on the sheet of paper that had for so long remained ominously white ; " but tell me what you think of this," and he read :

" Why is a tabby asleep on a tree trunk like the list of publications sent out by a publishing house ? Because it is a catalogue. "

The ambitious author looked up expectantly, but Guy said nothing, and Ruth had but the faintest shadow of a smile on her fair face as she said, gently : " But that isn't a joke, my dear Ward, it's a conundrum. "

" Well, what of that ? That makes it all the

better, doesn't it? Getting two things for the price of one, don't you see?"

But Ward did not speak in a very confident tone. It was evident that the cold reception accorded his first effort affected him considerably.

"I told you I hadn't smoothed off the rough edges yet," he said, half apologetically. "You see that 'a' bothers me. It doesn't come in the way it ought to."

It most certainly did not, and after twenty minutes' steady thinking in the effort to subjugate it, poor Ward was forced to give up the attempt in despair, and with it all hope of utilizing Emperor as the text for his initial essay in the field of comic literature.

"But everything requires practice," he tried to encourage himself by reflecting. "I got pretty near it that time. The next trial ought to end in success."

For the second attempt, he got up and began to walk up and down the little room, allowing his eyes to rove in every nook and corner of it.

"Surely I ought to find something funny in a flat," he mused. "The papers have been full of squibs about them for years."

But that was the trouble of it. Every good idea on which he struck, he found, on second thought, to be the reminiscence of some bright bit he had already read in the papers, and after half an hour's further trial, he threw down his pencil in disgust and went off to bed, thoroughly worn out, not to say discouraged.

CHAPTER XXIV

A STRANGE NIGHT ADVENTURE.

A WEEK went by. Mrs. Hammersley grew no better, and still required constant attendance, so that Ruth could not think of seeking an opening for teaching. Besides, there was no one but herself to see after the housekeeping. Ward had walked the streets day after day in search of work, and finally succeeded in finding a job in a drug store which brought him in but four dollars a week and required him to work for it fourteen hours a day. But he was so discouraged with his weary quest, that he readily closed with this offer and was fain to consider himself lucky to get even that.

Meanwhile the finances of the little household were being steadily depleted. The doctor was a stranger and must be paid promptly, while the same was the case with the medicines, even though they came from Beman & Bawn's, where Ward was employed.

Already a portion of Guy's income had been encroached upon instead of being rigorously set aside for rent day, now less than three weeks distant. What they were going to do poor Guy could not conceive. He was certainly doing his part, as a salary of ten dollars a week was undeniably a good

one for a boy of seventeen, but then it did not go a great way toward supporting five persons.

Night and day poor Guy studied over the problem, but could find no solution, unless indeed a visit to a shop under the sign of the three balls might serve to give them a temporary lift. But every time this thought occurred to him a shudder passed through his frame.

Every fine night he took long walks. He could think more clearly then, it seemed to him. Besides, he needed the exercise ; then he could stop for Ward on the way home, for the poor fellow did not get off till eleven. So after dinner he sat by his mother's bedside till she fell asleep, then putting on his hat and coat and leaving Ruth and Harold busy over some book they were reading together, he would go out for a long walk down towards the heart of the city.

One Monday evening Mrs. Hammersley fell asleep while they were at dinner, so Guy started out at seven. By eight he reached the theater district, and just as he was approaching one of the larger houses a carriage, with coachman and footman on the box, drew up before the entrance. The footman sprang down to open the door, and quite a young couple alighted. By the glare of the electric light Guy recognized the fellow he had seen twice before on Fifth Avenue, once walking and the second time driving in style.

Now, as he saw him by the side of a young girl in evening dress, both talking animatedly of the evening's enjoyment before them, Guy was irresist-

ibly reminded of similar episodes in his own life, and for one instant he changed his course and took two steps behind the two, trying to imagine for the moment that his happy past was back again, and that he too had come in a brougham to the playhouse with a fair young companion at his side.

But it was only two steps he took. His hard, practical sense quickly usurped the place of sentiment, and in another second he had turned on his heel and was taking great strides toward Madison Square, as if eager to put his weakness as far behind him as possible.

He took a longer walk than usual, and when he passed that same theater on his way home again it was half-past ten. The play was not over yet, but just as he reached the entrance to the lobby a young man with his hat pulled down over his eyes and his coat collar turned up came out. As soon as he reached the sidewalk, out of the glare of the lights, he stopped, and leaning his head against the side of the building, groaned aloud.

Thinking the man must have been taken ill and might be in need of assistance, Guy went up to him, and touching him on the shoulder, said kindly : " Excuse me, but you seem to be in trouble. Can I do anything for you ? "

" Yes, if you would be so good as to put me out of existence, and thus do away with the necessity of my committing a crime to accomplish the same thing myself. "

The man had turned on him suddenly, almost fiercely, and Guy saw that he was quite young, and

with a face of singular refinement. Then, while our hero was collecting his thoughts from the confusion to which they had been put by the unexpected response, the stranger went on in a softened tone :

“ But I beg your pardon for breaking out in this way. I don’t mean it, believe me. You have a good face, and must possess a kind heart. If you will just let me walk with you a way, you *can* help me by listening to my ‘tale of woe,’ ” and the young man gave a mirthless laugh as he quoted the name of the popular song.

“ Certainly,” replied Guy. “ I am going to walk all the way to Harlem and shall be glad of company part way.”

But as he spoke he could not help wondering if he was not imprudent in thus allowing such a very singular stranger to force himself upon him. He might be a confidence man, who had taken this novel means of awakening sympathy.

And yet Guy had nothing about him to lose. A dime or two in his pockets, that was all, for on these night walks he always left his watch at home. However, the glimpse he had had of the young man’s face was enough to convince him of the fact that he was no bunco steerer. So the two, thrown together so oddly, started off up Broadway together, and the stranger, taking Guy’s arm, began, very frankly :

“ It’s funny it should be so, and yet, simply because I never saw you before and do not even know your name, it is easier for me to open my heart to you than it would be to my most intimate friend. He is, in fact, the very one I most want to avoid. I’ve left

him, and all my other friends back there in the theater. I dare say they are wondering where I am and how I feel," and the fellow gave a short, bitter laugh as he threw a glance over his shoulder.

"I wonder if he can be mad?" was the thought that crossed Guy's mind at this juncture. But before he could come to a decision on this point his companion made an announcement that put this possibility out of the question.

"You see I wrote the play that was produced at the Criterion to-night for the first time, and it was a dead failure. I could see that myself by the middle of the first act, but I stood it out till they were half through the fourth, then I cut stick. The place was jammed with all my friends who had come to see my triumph, and I positively couldn't face them after things had turned out the way they did. Indeed I feel as if I never wanted to see any one of them again. I had talked so much about it and let everybody suppose that it was going to have a tremendous run, that I just feel as if I wanted to transfer myself to some place where I shouldn't meet anybody who ever knew me."

"Was it your first play?" Guy ventured to inquire as the other paused, and jabbed savagely with his silver-topped cane at some theater posters on a fence they were passing.

"Yes, and my last," came the prompt reply. "Of course I was lifted to the seventh heaven when it was accepted, and I can see now acted like an idiot by talking to everybody I met about it, telling them how swimmingly the rehearsals were going and all that."

"But it may not be as bad as you think," Guy went on, really wishing that he could pour some balm on the wounded spirit of this sensitive soul. "Perhaps the piece is already saved by the last act."

"Oh, I know better than that, better than any one else can, how highly improbable that is. Why, it was so bad that the audience actually got to laughing in the wrong places. Oh, it was fearful. I got as far back in the box as I could and didn't dare go out between the acts for fear of the talk about the 'frightful bore, don't you know,' I should hear in the lobby. I really don't know what's going to become of me."

"Then you had staked everything on the success of this play," said Guy, who naturally just at present looked at all the evils that might befall mankind from a financial standpoint. "Will the loss be very heavy?"

"Oh, I don't care a penny about that. My income can easily foot the bills. It's the social side of the thing that just knocks me over. How can I go out in society again and hear people whispering to one another, 'Oh, there goes Shepard. He was the fellow who wrote that play that failed so dismally at the Criterion'? The only thing for me to do is to keep in the dark till I can find something else connected with the theater, other than play writing, in which I can interest myself."

On hearing these words a project suddenly shaped itself in Guy's mind that for an instant almost took

away his breath. It seemed so stupendous, so utterly out of the bounds of possibility.

And yet, even though there was but a slender thread on which to hang a hope, ought he to let this opportunity slip without putting out a hand to at least make an attempt at grasping it?

CHAPTER XXV.

MR. ARTHUR SHEPARD.

Guy and his peculiar companion had by this time reached the neighborhood of Central Park, and the former had now learned that the other's name was Arthur Shepard, that he was quite alone in the world so far as immediate family was concerned, although he had a host of relatives eager to fawn upon him by reason of the fortune his father had left him. Having a strong taste for the stage, he had taken up play writing, and, as he numbered among his large list of friends many actors and not a few managers, he had had no difficulty in getting his comedy accepted.

All this he told with the frankness of a child.

"Somehow it comforts me," he explained, "to be able to talk in confidence to a fellow I've never seen before. You see it can't do any harm; he doesn't know any of my friends, and he can't very well carry tales. I don't know but gossip would lose all its sting if it were only carried on among total strangers. It would stop every time then, don't you see, with the first person who heard it."

Whether impelled to do so by these philosophic precepts, or influenced by the example set him, Guy

is not certain, but he soon found himself telling bits of his own life history to Mr. Shepard, and thus the way was paved for him to broach the matter upon which he felt so much might depend.

"Mr. Shepard," he began suddenly, "you just now said you wished you knew of something besides play writing in which you could interest yourself. I wonder if you are not the very person a small half-brother of mine would like to meet."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the other excitedly. "Give me something now, at once, to fill my thoughts in place of this dreadful fiasco, and you will merit my lasting gratitude. You see, my dear boy, the penalty of being born rich. One has got to have a fad to furnish himself with occupation, and when one of these fails him—as mine has just done—he must straightway find another, or die of *ennui*. Now tell me about this half-brother of yours."

"Well, I only make bold to mention the matter at all," began Guy, "because you have some connection with the theater, and I think therefore that you might be able to take an interest in Harold's aspirations. He wants an opening to become an 'infant phenomenon;' in short, to play 'Fauntleroy'! He knows the story by heart, and ever since he discovered an article in the paper telling how many children there were throughout the country playing the part of the little lord, and giving the amounts of the salary they received, he has been very anxious to get an opening somewhere, and do his share toward paying the family expenses."

"But has he really talent, do you think?" said

Shepard, who was listening with the most rapt attention.

"Miss Farleigh says he has. You see she is the only one to whom the boy has confided his ambitions, and it was only a day or two ago that she told me about them. She says that when they are alone together up there in the flat all day he reels off whole chapters of dialogue from the story. Now I notice that the manager of the Criterion has some of the rights for 'Fauntleroy,' so I thought you might at least bring Harold to his notice."

"How old is the boy, did you say?"

"Just ten."

"Is he dark or light?"

"Light; a blonde, with blue eyes. Oh, he's a regular Cedric Errol in looks."

"Will you bring him down to my rooms in the Jura to-morrow night? English will want something to take the place of my play right off, and if this boy turns out to be a real phenomenon, he can put 'Fauntleroy' right on. If, as you say, he knows the words already, I'll undertake to coach him for the part in a week's time, and manage the tour for him. All this, of course, if he turns out what we both trust he will. I scarcely dare hope it, though. If you knew the number of children that have been brought to English since the Fauntleroy craze started, and had seen for yourself, as I have, how ill qualified they were for the part, you would understand what I mean when I say that I 'scarcely dare hope.' You can come with him down to the Jura to-morrow night, can you? You know where it is?"

"Oh, yes, I lived there myself once and have a friend there—Bert Arlington. Perhaps you know him?"

"Arlington! Of course I do, and a nice fellow he is. He can tell you about me, and convince you that I am all right, if you did find me butting my head against a brick wall like a Harlem goat. But I must leave you here. By the time I get back to my rooms everything will have quieted down, and I needn't meet anybody till morning, when I hope I shall have quieted down too, thanks to you."

"To me!" exclaimed Guy in surprise. "Why, I haven't done anything to help you, I am sure."

"Why, yes, you have. You came up and spoke kindly to me when you didn't know I had money. I tell you, we chaps who are afflicted with wealth appreciate little things like that. But good-night. Here is my card. I shall expect you and the boy to-morrow night about eight."

He held out his hand, shook Guy's heartily, then turned on his heel and strode rapidly back towards the heart of the town.

"Well, of all the queer adventures I ever had, this is the oddest," soliloquized Guy, as he quickened his own steps in order not to miss going home with Ward.

"I'll ask Bert all about Shepard to-morrow. Maybe he's a crank, and is putting on airs about his being so wealthy, and all that, although I don't believe it of him. There's that outspoken frankness about the fellow that impels me to trust him almost in spite of myself. Wonder what Ward will say to the affair?"

He reached the drug store just as his friend was

leaving, and at once told him the story of his strange encounter.

"By Jove, the fellow had been drinking, hadn't he?" exclaimed Ward, when Guy was about half through the recital.

"No, indeed, he hadn't, or I'd have detected it, but wait till you hear the rest;" and Hammersley then went on to tell about Harold and the possibility of his finding an opening to act the star rôle in a popular play.

"Great Cæsar, if that goes through, that ten-year older will be earning more money a week than you and I put together!" and Ward gave vent to a long, low whistle, which might mean either supreme satisfaction or the reverse.

"Well, I believe they get all the way from twenty to seven hundred dollars a week," responded Guy.

"Seven hundred!" ejaculated Ward. "Don't believe it, not to doubt you, Hammersley, but the newspaper in which you saw the statement. But do you suppose his mother will let him act, if this manager says he will do?"

"I think so, yes, if we do not say anything about it till we bring back a favorable report from Mr. English. So be careful how you speak about the matter at home before we learn the decision."

The next day, as soon as he reached the office, Guy asked Arlington what he knew about Shepard.

"Oh, you mean the fellow whose play failed so dismally at the Criterion last night!" exclaimed Bert. "I was there myself, and a worse fiasco I have never seen, though the actors did their very best to save it.

I understand that English has already decided to take it off at the end of the week. But about this Arthur Shepard. Do you know him?"

"I have met him," answered Guy, guardedly. He did not wish to say much about him till he had heard Arlington's opinion of the man.

"Well, you found him a little queer, I'll venture," went on Bert. "But he's an awfully good-hearted chap, and I feel downright sorry for him. Still, he can easily afford to lose any money he's sunk in the venture. He's said to be worth three or four millions."

A customer coming in claimed Guy's attention at this point, and nothing further was said on the subject. But he had learned enough to convince him that Shepard was a gentleman, and when he went home that night he was in a more excitable frame of mind than he had been in since his mother had fallen on the stage at Brilling.

Harold had not been told yet, but as soon as he had seen his mother that night, Guy called the boy into their bedroom and suggested that he had better put on his velvet suit.

"And perhaps Miss Farleigh has a red sash she will lend you," he added. "Your overcoat will hide it while we are on the cars."

"Oh, Guy," cried the boy, his eyes dilating. "Has she told you about it?"

"Yes; and you are going with me to a manager to-night to see what you can do. Who knows but you will be the one to raise the fortunes of the family to the top notch?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

HAROLD APPEARS BEFORE THE MANAGER.

MR. ARTHUR SHEPARD'S apartments at the Jura were luxurious in the extreme. The most expensive rugs covered the polished floors, while Japanese screens, oriental pottery and Egyptian relics were scattered about in boundless profusion.

"It reminds me of Grandpa Dodge's," Harold whispered, as the servant ushered them into the drawing-room.

"That shows the stuff the sturdy little chap is made of," reflected Guy. "Not one word of regret for the luxuries he has lost have I ever heard him utter."

It was true. The boy seemed so entirely content at finding his mother that no invidious comparisons between his present mode of life and that which he had enjoyed for the previous four months appeared ever to occur to him. Even now, his remark concerning the similarity of the furnishings to those to which he had been accustomed in Brilling had no trace of regret in it.

Mr. Shepard appeared at once in a velvet smoking jacket, and Guy noticed by the involuntary drawing in of his breath when his eye first fell on Harold that

the impression produced by the appearance of the boy was a favorable one.

"Mr. English will be here in a moment," he said, as he shook hands. "Ah, here he is now," and he went forward to greet a tall gentleman, with a close-shaven black beard and a searching way of looking at one through his eyeglasses that Guy thought must be particularly trying to Harold under the circumstances.

"This is the boy, then, is it?" he said in a quick, business-like tone, when the introductions had been made.

He walked up to Harold, put his hand on his head for an instant, and placed the latter against his vest, keeping an eye on a certain particular button as he did so.

"Height all right," he commented. "Good figure, too, and just the coloring for Fauntleroy. Now let's hear what you can do, young man. Here, Shepard, take him off into your bedroom yonder, as far away as you can get, and yet have him in sight. I want to see how his voice fills. You know the book pretty well, they tell me," he went on, turning to Harold. "Can you give us some of that talk of Cedric with his grandfather in the second act?"

"Yes, I know it all by heart," answered Harold readily, looking straight up into Mr. English's eyes; and as the boy walked off with Shepard, Guy heard the manager mutter:

"First class carriage. Doesn't hang his head and look silly when spoken to."

"I'll do the grandfather act," proposed Shepard

when they had reached the other room, and hastily putting two chairs and a table in position, he announced that all was ready for Harold to begin.

So without any blushings or stammerings, or inquiries of "Where?" the boy started off at "Are you the earl?" and with only slight pauses for the grandfather's replies, which Shepard, not knowing the part, was obliged to fill in with dumb show, went on till he was interrupted by an outburst of hand clapping from Mr. English.

"That will do," said the manager. "If only you can escape stage fright you ought to get through first rate with a little coaching."

On hearing this, Harold's reserve gave way, and bounding across the floor he came rushing up to Mr. English and demanded, eagerly: "Oh, will I, and will you really give me a chance to play the part? I—I thought it was too good to be true when Guy told me there was a little bit of a chance of it."

"Well, now we will talk it over a little with your brother here while you—" Mr. English hesitated and glanced at Shepard, who promptly came to the rescue with a Japanese dish full of photographs and the suggestion: "Here, Harold, take these over to the lamp yonder, and study up an attitude. They are pictures of various Fauntleroy boys and girls."

As soon as the boy had gone off, Mr. English addressed himself to Guy.

"Have you authority to make business arrangements for your brother?" he began. "I should like to put this thing through at once, so we can announce Fauntleroy for next Monday."

"No, I am afraid not finally," answered Guy. "You see we have said nothing to his mother about all this as yet. She is ill and we did not wish to excite her needlessly. Now that you have decided the boy will be apt to make a success, if you will make us an offer for his services, I will be glad to submit it to her and let you know the result at the earliest possible moment."

"I suppose by that you would like to know the salary I am willing to give him," responded Mr. English, reflectively stroking his beard. "You see he is utterly untrained for the stage, although manifesting a remarkable aptitude for it. Taking this fact into consideration I cannot consistently offer more than thirty dollars a week to begin with—and to continue, say, for a period of three months. Contract to be broken by either party only after two weeks' notice. That is fair, isn't it?"

With a vivid recollection of the experience with Colonel Starr, Guy was bound to admit that it was, and promised to submit the offer to Mrs. Hammersley and report upon it the next morning at the theatre if possible when he came to business.

"And if favorable," said Mr. English, rising and drawing on his gloves, "as I trust it may be, bring the boy with you, and we will get him accustomed to the stage at once. Let me see, the name is——"

"Harold, Harold Glenn," returned Guy, for Mrs. Hammersley had preferred that the boy should retain his father's name rather than take her present one.

"Good, that will look well on the bills," went on the manager, "which reminds me of another reason

for haste in this matter. I must go back to the theater now as quickly as possible. Good-night, Shepard. Much obliged for your offices in this matter. Good-bye, Mr. Hammersley. Good-night, Harold."

Mr. English hurried off, and Guy and his brother were about to follow him, when Shepard announced that he couldn't think of letting them go yet. He then got out the paraphernalia for some sleight-of-hand tricks, sent upstairs to Arlington to come down and help him, and the two then proceeded to thoroughly delight and mystify Harold till nine o'clock, when ice cream and cake was produced, after which Guy declared positively that it was time for little boys to be to bed.

"I'll be at the Criterion to-morrow when you get there, Hammersley," said Shepard at parting, "and will take charge of our young star while you are at the office. So you can tell his mother he will be well cared for."

"But the costumes," suggested Guy, the thought of them suddenly occurring to him. "Shall we be expected to provide them?"

"Oh, no, I imagine not, under the present contract," answered Shepard. "I will speak to English about that in the morning, and let you know when you come."

Harold said but little on the way home, but his eyes sparkled, and once or twice Guy saw his lips moving, showing that he was conning the lines of the familiar story.

"When are you going to speak to mamma about

it, Guy?" he asked, as they left the train at Ninety-Third Street. "To-night?"

"If she is awake, yes," was the answer.

The older lad was almost as excited over this sudden prospect which had opened before them as was the younger. Thirty dollars a week! Why, that would lift them entirely above all cause for worryment. And yet, it seemed heartless to look on this sordid side, and to reflect that they were to owe their respite from grinding poverty to the offices of a boy of ten.

Still, one glance at the radiant young face beside him was enough to prove convincingly the fact that the earning of this weekly wage would be pure and unalloyed delight, not toil. And in this frame of mind, Guy sought his mother's chamber when they reached the flat.

She was awake, and feeling easier, she said.

"You have been out with Harold, Ruth tells me," she began, when Guy came in.

"Yes, mother, and I want to tell you all about it now;" and thinking it best that the subject should be approached gradually, Guy started in with an account of his adventure in front of the Criterion Theater the previous evening, and wound up with a report of Mr. English's offer of an hour before.

"And now all rests with you, mother," he concluded. "Harold is completely wrapped up in the idea, but I can see he loves the art for its own sake and not for any notoriety it may bring him, so that it cannot harm him. And I will undertake to go with him every night to the theater. And I believe it will

hasten your recovery if you have it to look forward to see him act."

"Do you, Guy? Well, then, I will consent."

And Guy hurried off to Harold with the good news.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LONE POINT.

It may readily be believed that the three boys found much to chat about that night before they finally fell asleep.

"Talk about your fairy stories and tales from the 'Arabian Nights!'" said Ward. "The idea that a boy of ten should be able to earn three times as much money as a chap seven years older seems utterly preposterous."

Be this as it might, it was a most fascinating possibility to the person most intimately concerned, and Harold woke up the next morning in such boundless good spirits that he roused his two companions by opening hostilities in a pillow fight. He calmed down, however, when he reached the theater with Guy, and became very business-like.

Shepard was there to receive them and took the boy off at once to a tailor's to have him measured for his suits.

"This rehearsal will be an all-day job, with a rest for lunch," Shepard told Guy at parting. "I'll take Harold home with me at noon for that, so you needn't bother about him. Will deliver him to you

all right when you call for him at the theater at quarter-past five."

"Don't work him too hard now," was Guy's caution, as he started for the office.

Here he found an important commission awaiting him.

"Guy," said Mr. Clarke, as he entered, "I think I shall have to ask you to go up on the New Haven road this morning. Mrs. Westmore and her daughter want to see the Warburton place up there at Rye. Both Mr. Kenworthy and myself have engagements we cannot break, and Bert has to go over on the West side. So here is sufficient for car fare and incidentals. You can get a carriage to take you over the place from the station. It is quite a distance, I believe. Old Mr. Warburton lives there, but you can make out a permit. You will find full information about terms of sale in this book," and Mr. Clarke put his finger on a volume on top of his desk.

Guy took down the book, and, finding the proper entry, discovered some facts about "Lone Point," which was the name given to the property, which fired him with eager curiosity to see it for himself.

It was situated on Long Island Sound, comprised twenty acres in all, the house was built of stone, and, judging from the sectional view given in the description, must be extremely handsome. The price asked was very high, and the reason for selling, illness of the owner's wife, which forced him to take up his residence in the South of France.

From Bert, Guy ascertained that the Westmores were people from Ohio, who had struck oil literally

within the past few months, and were anxious to purchase a handsome country-seat along the Sound.

"Oh, they're not upstarts, as most of these newly rich are apt to be," Arlington hastened to add. "They've had money before, but not so much. Here they come now."

A handsome brougham drew up before the door, and a young lady, apparently not more than sixteen, stepped out, followed by an older one, although the latter did not seem much past middle life.

"My, she's as pretty as a picture. You're in luck, Guy," whispered Bert, as the two entered the office.

But Guy seemed not to hear. His brows were knit in profound thought as he asked himself the question, "Whom does that girl look like, and where have I seen her before?" He could give himself no satisfactory answer to either question, and tried to banish it from his mind as Mr. Clarke introduced him to the ladies and explained that he was to be their guide to Lone Point.

"I shall make papa change the name if he buys asserted Miss Amy. "Ur-r-r, it makes me shudder every time I hear it mentioned."

Guy was invited to occupy the extra seat in the front of the brougham, and the coachman ordered to drive to the Grand Central Station.

Although it was a winter's day, the sun shone bright, and our hero anticipated no small degree of pleasure from his outing. Candor compels us to add that he experienced this sensation more strongly when his eyes rested for an instant on his fellow

occupants in the carriage than when he took note of the weather.

Mrs. Westmore had a good many questions to ask concerning the house and grounds of the estate they were going to inspect.

"Mr. Westmore is so busy down-town," she explained, "that he doesn't care to take the time to see the place unless he is certain first that it will suit Amy and myself."

Guy, thanks to his study of the plans and maps, was enabled to answer most of the questions put to him, and by the time they reached the station, Mrs. Westmore and her daughter knew as much about Lone Point as he did himself. In exchange, as it were, Guy had learned that Miss Amy had a brother Ridley, two years older than herself, who was passionately fond of driving, and who had charged them to see that the roads at Rye were good ones.

The mention of this fact solved the mystery.

"I know now where I have seen this girl," said Guy to himself. "Night before last, going into the Criterion Theater with the fellow who drives that T-cart. He's the person she looks like, and must be her brother."

It was queer. He seemed bound to run across this fellow in one way or another. At any rate he had now found out his name—Ridley Westmore. And here was Guy, riding in the same carriage with his sister, and only two nights before he had taken two steps behind them, to try and imagine that he was enjoying his old-time privileges!

On reaching Rye, after a pleasant trip on the cars,

Guy hired a hack in waiting at the station, and ordered the man to drive to the Warburton place.

Both Amy and her mother were very favorably impressed with the appearance of the country, and the former declared that Ridley could not fail to be pleased with the facilities for driving. A ride of some twenty minutes brought them at last to the borders of the Sound, and presently the carriage turned in at an imposing gateway and bowled along an avenue that must have been beautiful indeed when the trees that bordered it were in leaf.

The house, which could be seen a considerable distance away, was built of gray stone, and bore a strong resemblance to some European castle, or rather to that idea of it which is generally prevalent in this country. It stood clear out on the end of the point, the waves of the Sound washing the walls of the driveway closely on either side.

"How do you like it, Amy?" asked her mother.

"It must be lovely in summer," was the girl's answer—"with the name changed."

"It seems very quiet all about here," went on Mrs. Westmore. "I should think it would take a good many servants to run a place like this."

But when they reached the house, and Guy sprang out to press the electric button beside the massive front door, there was no response. Three times Guy rang, and then Mrs. Westmore asked the driver if everybody had gone away.

"Don't know much about this place up to the village," was his answer. "'There's a weddin' of a butler's daughter over to Mamaroneck at Mr. Arnold's. P'r'aps all the help have gone there."

At this instant Amy exclaimed :

“Look, mother, up at that window yonder. There’s an old gentleman making signs to us.”

But now he had raised the window and was calling down : “Did you come to see Mr. Warburton ?”

“No, not exactly,” replied Guy, coming out from the portico to stand under the second story window, out of which the old gentleman was leaning. “These ladies have come with me from Messrs. Kenworthy & Clarke’s, to see the house with a view to purchasing.”

“Oh, so sorry,” returned the old gentleman. “The servants are all out.”

(“Why doesn’t he come down and open the door himself?” whispered Amy to her mother.)

“But won’t they be back soon?” asked Guy, feeling not a little chagrined to think that he had piloted the ladies all this distance on a wild-goose chase.

“That is uncertain ; I cannot say positively,” responded the old gentleman, who, as much as they could see of him, had a distinguished, even a military bearing. “But perhaps you can get in, after all. Is there not a rubber mat in front of the door?”

“Yes,” answered Guy, beginning to be considerably mystified.

“Well, lift the—let me see—the northeast corner of it,” went on the old gentleman, “and I think you will find the key there. I believe that is where Max leaves it. And when you have opened the door, if you will be kind enough to replace it, I shall be much obliged.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MAJOR WARBURTON INTRODUCES HIMSELF.

"WHAT an extraordinary person!" whispered Amy, as the old gentleman craned his neck out of the window to an alarming extent in order to see that Guy properly carried out his instructions.

Before doing so, however, the latter looked questioningly at Mrs. Westmore.

"Yes, I don't see why we shouldn't go in," she answered in response to the glance. "I suppose the old gentleman is a member of the family and thinks it beneath his dignity to come down and open the door for us."

"He's Mr. Warburton's father, I think," returned Guy, as he proceeded to carry out directions.

He found the key on the spot designated, but before opening the door stepped back to assist the ladies out of the carriage and ascertain at what hour they wished the driver to return for them.

"Oh, can't he wait?" asked Mrs. Westmore.

"Yes, if you like," returned Guy; "but the next train back doesn't leave till 12:10, and it is just eleven now."

"Permit me," broke in the voice of the old gentle-

man at this juncture. "Our horses do not receive exercise enough. I shall be most charmed to have Thomas take you all back in the wagonette."

"Oh, no," protested Mrs. Westmore, while Amy shook her head vigorously. "I couldn't think of putting you to so much trouble."

"No trouble, but pleasure, I assure you," insisted the old gentleman, and as he immediately disappeared from the window, evidently with the intention of giving the order to the coachman at once, there was no chance for further expostulation.

Thus there was nothing left for it but to pay and dismiss the man who had brought them over, after which Guy opened the door, and as the ladies passed in replaced the key under the corner of the rubber mat where he had found it. He then hastened into the house, closing the door behind him.

The hall was large and extremely ornate, with a huge fireplace at one side and the stairs coming down at one end in a series of graceful curves. Wide doorways, with heavy plush hangings, gave glimpses of beautifully furnished rooms on either hand, while a broad window at one end, with a seat running its entire width, looked out on the Sound.

But not a soul was visible, and a silence, almost portentous, reigned throughout the mansion.

"Why, where's the old gentleman?" Amy wanted to know. "Why doesn't he come to meet us?"

"Perhaps he's gone to the stable," Mrs. Westmore suggested laughingly. "But never mind the old gentleman, my dear. Use your eyes, so you can report to father and Ridley what the place looks like."

The house was truly magnificent. Everything was in perfect order, all the ornaments out just as if the entire family were at home. Even the clocks were going. Both Mrs. Westmore and her daughter seemed greatly pleased, and when they crossed the hall, and, passing down a short corridor hung with tapestry, entered a wing used as a dining-room, they became positively enthusiastic.

There was an outlook from two sides on the Sound, the ceiling was composed of a beautiful piece of fresco work, while in size the room was large enough to "give a german in," as Amy put it.

"I am so anxious to see upstairs," she said. "Where all is so lovely down here, I know the bedrooms must be too sweet for anything."

"Shall we go up now?" asked Guy, as they reached the main hall again.

"Yes, do," pleaded the girl. "We can leave the kitchen and all that till afterwards."

So the broad staircase was mounted, and there at the top stood the old gentleman, leaning over a gate such as is used to keep small children from tumbling down.

"So sorry I couldn't be with you to show you around down-stairs," he began, as they came to a standstill with the gate between them. "But that confounded Max—beg pardon, ladies, but he is terribly exasperating at times—he has locked this affair too, from mere force of habit, for all the children are out."

"But why do they lock it at all?" Mrs. Westmore wanted to know.

“Oh, it’s just Max’s forgetfulness. If you” (turning to Guy) “would be kind enough to step back a few feet you may find the key in one of the turns of the stairway next the wall.”

“Well, this is the queerest series of proceedings that ever came to my notice,” muttered Guy to himself, as he retreated and began to fumble about on the stairs.

He soon found the key, and having unlocked the gate, stood aside for the ladies to pass. Meanwhile the old gentleman was bowing and scraping in the upper hall.

“Major Warburton, *mesdames*,” he was saying. “At your service. And so pained that you should have happened to arrive at such an inopportune moment, with all the servants away. Pray allow me to show you at once to your rooms.”

Mother and daughter exchanged a startled glance on hearing this. What did he mean by speaking of “their rooms,” as though they were visitors? But then he had gone on ahead, thrown open a door, and such an alluring prospect peeped forth that they decided they must have misunderstood and hurried in after him.

They now found themselves in a beautiful apartment, looking out over the Sound. It was furnished throughout in pink, and the absence of a bed proclaimed the fact that it must be a sitting-room.

Major Warburton now insisted that the ladies should lay aside their wraps and remove their bonnets, asserting that the house was very warm, which was indeed the case, and he seemed to take it so to heart

when they declined that they were finally fain to comply, and were rewarded with a most courtly bow as the old gentleman took the articles from their hands and placed them on a three-cornered table.

"Charming!" commented Mrs. Westmore, taking in the view from the different windows.

"Is it not?" assented the major, and stepping to her side he began to point out some of the localities on the opposite shore of the Sound.

Meanwhile Amy had discovered a cabinet with a glass face containing some beautiful specimens of embroidery. She called Guy's attention to them, and the two were endeavoring to study out the meaning of an intricate design, when Major Warburton's voice, raised to a slightly louder pitch than before, attracted their attention.

"Why, of course, madam, you are to become my guest," he was saying. "But excuse me one moment," and before any one comprehended what he intended doing, he had turned, run out of the room, closed the door behind him and turned the key in the lock.

The three inside looked at one another with expressions on their faces which not one of them will ever forget. Only for an instant, though, did they stand thus transfixed.

"Mother," gasped Amy, rushing across the room to clasp Mrs. Westmore around the neck. "What does this mean! Why did he go out of the room in that way and lock the door? What were you saying to him?"

But surprise and terror combined had so far over-

come Mrs. Westmore that she could not at the moment make any reply. She sank down on a divan behind her and mutely beckoned for Guy to approach. The latter had already sprung to the door and tried it. But he found it firmly secured.

"Is that the only exit?" Mrs. Westmore asked him in a horror-stricken voice. "The man is crazy. I ought to have seen it before. All his oddness is explained now."

While she was speaking Guy had hurried across the room toward a curtain that hung at the farther end, and which he had just observed.

"Yes, here is a door," he cried exultantly; and instantly the other two had flown to his side.

It was a portière, and beyond it lay a bedroom, most completely furnished, and, what was more to the purpose under present circumstances, with three doors.

Guy sprang at the first of these and pulled at the knob. But it resisted his efforts. The next he found opened, but it led only to a large cedar closet. The third one was ajar and gave access to a perfectly appointed bath-room, which had no other door.

He turned back from this last trial with a blank face.

"We are prisoners, then?" said Mrs. Westmore, scarcely able to pronounce the words.

She was leaning against the window sash in the bedroom, and as she ceased speaking turned almost instinctively and looked down. It was all of twenty feet to the ground and an areaway of stone giving entrance to the kitchen, ran along just underneath.

“Don’t be disturbed, Mrs. Westmore,” said Guy, trying to inspire that hope in others which he was far from feeling himself. “Surely we sha’n’t be obliged to stay here very long.”

“But it is dreadful to have to stay at all,” returned the poor lady. “And even if he does let us out soon, what fate may await us? I do not know but I would rather stay here than see him again.”

“I know I shall die if I do,” moaned Amy, who was quite unnerved, and stood beside her mother twisting her fingers in and out of one another in a way that was truly pitiable.

At that instant the major’s voice was heard in the other room. He was evidently looking for them, and, judging from his tones, was by no means in so pleasant a humor as he had been when he promised to send the party back in his carriage.

CHAPTER XXIX.

GUY FINDS SOMETHING UNEXPECTEDLY.

"WHY did you lock that front door when you came in?" the old gentleman was calling out, repeating the phrase over and over, as is the habit with those whose minds are unbalanced.

Poor Amy, nearly fainting with terror, fell prostrate on the divan in the bay window, with her mother at her side trying to keep her courage up.

"Don't be frightened," said Guy. "I don't think he's of the sort to grow suddenly violent. If possible, don't let him see that you are afraid of him. What I can't understand is what he means by my locking the door. How could I do that when I put the key under the rug outside, as he told me to?"

By this time the major had reached the room where they were. As soon as he saw them he walked straight up to Guy, and taking him by the lapels of his coat, looked him straight in the eye as he demanded :

"Let me have that key out of your pocket!"

"What key?" asked Guy, in order to gain time.

"The key to the front door, to be sure."

"I haven't got it, Major Warburton. I left the door unlocked, and put the key under the mat, as you told me to," replied Guy firmly, but respectfully.

"But the door is locked," insisted the old gentleman, "and you must have done it. I want that key, or I cannot go out to the stable and order the carriage."

Mrs. Westmore spoke up at this point.

"Major Warburton," she said, "I can testify that this young man disposed of that key exactly as you requested him to do."

"Then, madam," responded the major, bowing low, "all I have to say is that some one has found it and made us all prisoners."

Mrs. Westmore flashed a glance at Guy, which was meant to express: "Do you believe him?"

This was just the question that was puzzling the young real estate clerk. He knew that the insane are fearfully cunning, and yet, if the door below had been open, and the major's aim had been to get out, as undoubtedly it was, why should he not have made his escape if the door had been in the condition in which Guy had left it?

On the other hand, who could have locked it? If it had been some one connected with the household, it was strange that he or she had not made an investigation into the cause of the door being open.

"But surely there must be some other way of getting out," went on Mrs. Westmore. Then, glancing at her watch, she added: "We must find it pretty soon, or we shall miss our train."

"Madam," rejoined the old gentleman, again

bowing in his stately fashion, "I cannot think of allowing my guests to depart by any other than the front door."

As he spoke he turned suddenly and went out as swiftly as he had done before, again fastening the door behind him.

"I cannot understand how that door came to be locked," muttered Guy, and he then gave his reasons for believing that the major had told the truth about it.

"But it is unaccountable to me," returned Mrs. Westmore, "that a man in such a condition should be left by himself in this way. It seems really criminal."

"I dare say this is the first time it ever happened," rejoined Guy. "Doubtless the wedding the driver told us about was one that all the servants here wished to attend, thinking no harm could come to their charge in the brief time of their absence. This leads me to hope that they will soon be back and let us out."

"But meanwhile that man may murder us all," put in Amy. "Can't we lock ourselves in till the servants come back?"

"I think not. There is no bolt on the door if I remember right," replied Guy, stepping across the floor to investigate. "No, I'm right. But you need have no fears, Miss Westmore. You can see for yourself he is not violent."

Nevertheless, it was by no means a pleasant situation, although their imprisonment was in what might be called a gilded cage. The sun poured down a

golden radiance on the sparkling waters of the Sound, and the whole place looked singularly beautiful, even at this season of the year.

But to this not one of the three gave a thought. Amy sat in one of the broad windows, with her face pressed against the pane, looking out with unseeing eyes. Her mother occupied a rocking-chair in the center of the room, glancing from her daughter to Guy, who was pacing the floor with knit brow.

"I wonder if I am responsible for this?" he was thinking. "These ladies were sent here in my charge, but then who would have thought we were to be received by a lunatic?"

At this point Amy sprang up from her seat with the exclamation :

"Look there, at that party in the sailboat! Can't we attract their attention in some way, and get them to come to our rescue?" and forthwith she began to wave her handkerchief frantically.

The men in the boat, which was about a hundred yards from shore, responded by waving theirs, and soon passed out of sight.

"It's no use to do that, Amy," said her mother. "They think you are only saluting them."

"Some of the servants must be back very shortly," added Guy. "Perhaps we may be able to take the train we wanted, after all."

"If we had only allowed that driver to come back for us!" sighed Mrs. Westmore.

Then ensued another silence, which each of the three, although none so expressed it, feared might be broken any moment by Major Warburton. Time

dragged by, and, finding that conversation was an inspirer of hope, Mrs. Westmore began to talk to Guy, first of their situation, and when that subject was exhausted, of himself.

"Your name," she said, "while rather an odd one, is very familiar to me. My cousin married a Mr. Franklin Hammersley."

"Why, that was my father's name!" exclaimed Guy, almost springing out of the chair he had taken near the center table.

"I wonder if it can be the same," said Mrs. Westmore, scarcely less excited than was Guy. "Was your father a Western man?"

"Yes; I was born in Glendale, a suburb of Cincinnati," answered Guy. "I knew very few of my mother's relatives. She died when I was only a baby."

"Then you must be my second cousin—let me see if I can recall your name;" and, with a hand outstretched toward him, Mrs. Westmore bent her head in deep thought. Only for an instant, then she raised it with the exclamation: "Guy. I just remember hearing they had decided to name the boy Guy. And you are Guy, are you not?"

"Yes, that's my name;" and the fellow felt slightly embarrassed as he submitted to having both hands clasped by his new found relative.

"Well, this is queer enough," remarked Mrs. Westmore, when she had informed Amy of her discovery. "Ridley will be delighted, I am sure, to find a cousin in New York so near his own age."

"That's so," reflected Guy. "She doesn't realize all the queerness of it, my turning out to be related

to the fellow I've run across so often in such an odd way."

Amy seemed to become suddenly shy of the young real estate clerk, transformed into her third cousin. She blushed when he looked at her, as indeed Guy did himself, and the new order of things promised to separate rather than bring them together, when the key was heard to turn in the lock of the door, and the latter opened to admit Major Warburton.

"Oh, save me from him!" cried the impulsive girl, fleeing to Guy and clasping his arm with both hands.

"Hush!" cautioned Guy; "don't let him see that he terrifies you." Then raising his voice, but still addressing her, he continued: "It was nothing but a mousescampering across the floor, Miss Westmore."

"Oh, have those pests got in here?" exclaimed the old gentleman. "I must see that Max has traps set. May I have the honor?" and he offered his arm to Mrs. Westmore.

Guy, by an expressive look, indicated that she should take it, and then tendered his to Amy, as he whispered: "This may give us an opportunity to escape."

So this strange lunch party filed out of the apartment, crossed the hall, and descended the stairs to the stately dining-room.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MATTER OF DATES.

THE table was set out most sumptuously, so far as the service was concerned. A table cloth of elaborate pattern, with embroidered edges, and napkins to match; a beautiful épergne in the center, flanked on either side by cut glass fruit dishes of unique design. A silver butter dish was at each place, while an imposing coffee urn, most chastely wrought, stood at one end.

There was an oyster plate at each cover, but instead of oysters or clams, these contained dates. In fact, dates were the only article of food visible.

Dates were piled high in each of the fruit dishes, overflowed from the épergne, and reposed, one on each of the butter plates.

“Pray be seated,” said the major, waving his hand to a place on his right for Mrs. Westmore, one on his left for Amy, while he motioned to Guy to take the other end of the table. “I trust you are all fond of dates. They are a passion with me, you know. There are my sons, John and Mark, both named for their uncles, and here, some five years since, I discovered that John was born on St. John’s Day, and

Mark on St. Mark's Day. And now do you wonder that I am interested in dates? Help yourselves; there are plenty more in the pantry."

"Mad as a March hare," said Guy to himself, glancing out of the broad windows in search of assistance, as he helped himself to dates with an oyster fork.

Amy was too frightened to eat. Observing this, Major Warburton frowned and said meaningly :

"I trust, my dear young lady, you are not going to neglect my favorites."

On finding herself thus addressed, the poor girl's cheek paled and Guy feared that she was going to faint. This would have been most unfortunate, as the excitement which it would naturally induce would be very apt to cause the old gentleman to become more than merely peculiar.

Something must be done at once to avert such a catastrophe. But what? Guy glanced about the room wildly, while Amy, with the major's suggestion reinforced by a meaning look from her mother, was making an heroic effort to carry a date to her mouth.

If it were only possible to lure the old man into some strong room and confine him there? During their recent inspection of the mansion they should have seen such a place, if one existed, and suddenly Guy recollected where it was. The china closet!

This was situated in the passage-way leading from the hall to the dining-room and was lighted, as Guy had remarked at the time, by a high, narrow window, scarcely six inches wide, and which, viewed from the exterior, was one of the features that contributed to give the house its castle-like aspect. The

door of stout oak was a sliding one, with the key on the outside, as Guy remembered by reason of Mrs. Westmore having caught her dress in it as she passed.

"If I can only get him into that closet by some hook or crook," thought the boy, "we can shut him up there and go for help."

But what pretext could be found for getting the host up from the dinner-table and into the china closet?

"If I can only lure him there by some stratagem," Guy told himself.

He had just eaten his last date, which left him free to admire the entire design of the oyster plate if he so chose. But he was far too preoccupied to give it more than a passing glance. And yet this one glance furnished him with an inspiration.

"Oh, Major Warburton," he suddenly broke forth, "you say you are so fond of coincidences in dates. I wonder if I have not discovered another for you."

"Really, what is it? Most extraordinary, I am sure," and the major abandoned his attempt to make Amy eat, and turned to his vis-a-vis with eager interest in face and voice.

"Why, these oyster plates," rejoined Guy, hoping that the Westmores would understand that he had a special plan in view. "They are the handsomest I have ever seen, and I was just wondering whether the set was complete. I suppose there are twelve of them, and this is the twelfth of the month. But servants are so careless, it is possible some of them may have been broken."

It was a lame expedient, Guy knew. Only a man crazy on one theme could by any possibility be taken in by it. In the greatest suspense he awaited the result.

"That's so," exclaimed the major, after an instant's reflection. "It is the twelfth of the month, and I know we had a dozen of those oyster plates. But I heard a crash in the pantry only yesterday, and it is barely possible one of these dishes was in it."

"Had you not better see at once?" suggested Guy, boldly. "These coincidences in dates are very important—to us," he added under his breath.

"Well, if the ladies will excuse me for a moment, I believe I will," rejoined the major, after wriggling uneasily in his seat. "I will be right back."

He rose and stepped, in his quick, nervous fashion, across the hard-wood floor. The china closet was just within the hallway, and as soon as he had disappeared within it, "Let us fly," gasped Mrs. Westmore, half rising from her chair.

Guy shook his head, laid his finger across his lips, and then rising, stole on tiptoe towards the hallway. He heard the rattle of crockery just as he reached it, then seizing the door knob at his left, he suddenly ran it forward and turned the key in the lock inside of half a minute.

Amy gave a faint scream, and Mrs. Westmore got up and hurried to her side. Guy only waited long enough to make sure that the door was securely locked, and then came back into the dining-room.

Before he could say a word a series of thunderous blows was rained upon the oak portal of the china

closet and an instant later a crash of crockery was heard.

"Oh, this is terrible," groaned Mrs. Westmore, for Amy had fainted, and lay back in the great carved chair, as if in death.

Guy hastily brought some water, and between them they soon brought the girl to, but when she heard the noise the major was still making in the china closet, she showed strong symptoms of going off into another collapse.

"We must get her into some other part of the house," said Guy.

"But why not leave at once?" returned the mother.

"If as you say, he cannot get out of that pantry, there is nothing now to hinder us from making our escape."

"I am afraid there is," was the reply. "You remember we discovered all the windows locked with some patent fastening, and I am sure that stone area-way runs all around the house. But if we go upstairs again I think your daughter can be made more comfortable. It cannot be very long now before some one comes."

So, one on either side of the terrified girl, they conducted her up the stairs to the pleasant room where they had first been made prisoners.

"Now, if you will remain here," said Guy, "I will go down and see if there is any possible way of getting out. You need not be alarmed to stay alone. I am sure the old gentleman cannot make his escape."

"Go," said Mrs. Westmore; "we will stay here and watch for any chance passer-by."

He remained on that floor long enough, however, to satisfy himself of one thing: that the major had been shut in a room specially reserved for him and had forced his way out. Pulling aside a portière at the end of this upper hallway, Guy beheld the solution of the mystery, for a mystery he certainly held it to be that a man so far gone in dementia as Major Warburton should be left to roam at will in such a mansion.

Behind the curtain just mentioned was a door with a hole in it just below the lock as large as Guy's fist. It had evidently been whittled out with a knife so that the occupant's hand could be thrust through and the bolt slid back. Stepping inside for an instant, Guy beheld an apartment almost luxurious in its furnishings, a *suite* of them in fact, for parlor and dining-room, chamber and bath, opened out of one another. But he had no time to make a close inspection. He must see if there was not some means of leaving the house which contained such a fearful skeleton in its closet.

Retracing his steps, he descended the main stairway, and was almost deafened by the shouts and blows which the old gentleman was keeping up in the china closet.

"If he should get out now I'm afraid he would kill us," Guy told himself with a shudder he could not repress.

And yet he felt that he had done the right thing in confining him. But what if he had that knife with him still?

"I had better inspect the china closet door," reflected Guy.

He did so and found that, so far as the exterior, at any rate, was concerned, it was just as he had left it. Paying no heed to the cries that came from within, he crossed the passage-way to the butler's pantry, where he found a stairway leading to the basement. He knew the outside doors were locked, and he was debating with himself whether he would be justified in breaking his way out through a window, when he heard footsteps on the porch overhead.

He started to hurry back to meet the newcomers, but could not at once recall by which door he had entered the large kitchen in which he now found himself. He opened two only to find that they led, the one to the cellar, the other to the laundry, and had just hurriedly thrown back a third, when a heavy hand gripped him by the shoulder and a voice of strong German accent exclaimed in his ear: "Ha, I haf you now. Here, Carl, help me wid the young rascal. Augusta, Augusta, run into the laundry and bring a clothes line till we bind him."

Meanwhile Guy was struggling not only to free himself bodily from the firm grip in which he was held, but to exculpate himself morally from whatever charge should be brought against him. The nature of this he could easily guess. He had been found in the basement of a house that was supposed to be locked up, and had been taken for a thief. However, he had no fear but that he could easily explain matters. Besides, there were Mrs. Westmore and her daughter to bear witness to his story.

But up to the present moment he had gained not the slightest headway in this direction. With two men

ready to place their hands over his mouth as soon as he started to open it, there was not much encouragement to talk. Finding himself powerless to contend against both, he presently ceased to struggle, resolved to wait till their choler, valor or whatever it was, had cooled a little, when he would, in all the quietness of offended dignity, convince them of the serious error they had committed.

Suddenly the unknown "Augusta" announced her return with the clothes line by calling in a loud whisper : "Here's a rope, Carl."

Guy started. Where had he heard that voice before? He was so absorbed, trying to remember, hoping that he should find a friend, that he made no resistance when his two captors hustled him out of the dark closet into the center of the kitchen. Here there was a three-sided recognition, for, as soon as he caught sight of her face, Guy saw that "Augusta" was none other than Mrs. Traubmann, the wife of the Greenwich Street shoe dealer, while the latter himself was one of the two men who were industriously winding him up in the clothes line.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FRESH FOES.

MRS. TRAUBMANN gave a scream, and began to jabber away to her husband in German. The latter had already started back with the exclamation: "That thief of a clerk!"

"It's all up with me now," sighed poor Guy. "Mr. Inwood has evidently never taken pains to clear my character at the shoe store. My sole reliance now is the Westmores."

After a great deal of talk in their native tongue, and when Guy had been trussed up like a turkey and tied to the door knob, he found an opportunity to get in a word.

"Mr. Traubmann," he began.

But he got no further.

"Dere, vat I tell you, Max?" broke in the shoe dealer. "You see he know me, and gif himself away. Ach, he must be a bad one."

"Go up to the second floor and ask two ladies you will find there if I am not telling the truth when I say that I came here with them from Kenworthy & Clarke to show them the house."

By a persistent effort Guy managed to hold the floor long enough to get all this out, and he could

see, from the expression on the face of the man called Max (who was evidently Major Warburton's keeper) at the mention of the real estate agents' names, that he had produced an impression.

"Go and see if you can find the ladies, Augusta," he said.

But Mr. Traubmann interposed with : "Don't waste your time, Augusta. Dot is only a story of dis young man's. You know vat he is."

Guy suddenly bethought him of that note Mr. Inwood had scribbled for him. If he could show that to the shoe dealer it would be sufficient to rehabilitate his character. He was not sure whether he had it about him or not, and, bound as he was, he could not make an examination to find out.

As may be imagined, he was by this time pretty wrothy.

"You are insulting not only me but my employers," he cried, "besides compelling me to leave the two ladies whom I accompanied here to wonder at my absence."

"But why did you try to rush into dat pantry and hide when you heard us coming?" Max wanted to know.

"I became confused with all the doors about here and lost my way," replied Guy. "I was trying to hurry up and meet you."

"But vat business had you down here any vay?" put in Mr. Traubmann.

At this instant a crash of chinaware sounded directly overhead. The major had remained quiet for the past few minutes, or else there had been so much

noise in the basement that Guy had failed to hear other sounds.

"Himmel!" cried Max, making for the stairs. "De major must have got out."

"What will he say when he finds him locked up in the china closet?" Guy asked himself.

He had the key in his pocket, he recollected, with a sense of satisfaction. The liberty to get this would permit him to search for that scrap of paper from Mr. Inwood.

It seemed that Max had not been gone half a minute before he was back again, leaping down the stairs two steps at a time, and almost foaming at the mouth with rage.

"Did you lock Major Warburton up?" he demanded of Guy, rushing fiercely up in front of the prisoner.

"Certainly I did," answered the latter boldly. "I am sure he is not a safe person to be allowed at large."

"But he wasn't at large. He was locked up in his own apartment, and *you must have let him out.*"

Guy could see that a good share of the anger manifested by the German was due to the fact that he felt that he was himself guilty of gross negligence in having left his charge alone. We are always more severe on others when we feel that we ourselves have been derelict in duty.

"What would I want to let a crazy man out for?" returned Guy. "I tell you he was out when I came in, and I was obliged to lure him into that closet for fear he might do some deed of violence. Did you

see the ladies when you were upstairs just now ? ” he added suddenly.

“ No, and I don’t believe there are any ladies here,” returned Max suddenly. “ But the first thing I’ve got to attend to is de major. Vere is de key to dat closet ? ”

“ I’ve got it in my pocket.”

“ Hand it over then.”

“ If you will undo my hands so that I can get at it, I shall be most happy to do so.”

“ Tell me which pocket it’s in and I’ll get it,” said the wary Max.

“ Here,” and Guy nodded his head towards his right thigh. Then he added : “ I wish at the same time, you’d take my card case out of my breast pocket. I think you’ll find a paper there that will convince Mr. Traubmann that Mr. Inwood had reason to change his opinion of me.”

“ I’ll find that, while you get de key,” volunteered the shoe dealer, eagerly launching himself on the prisoner. “ Augusta ” meantime had disappeared.

Max soon had the key and was off upstairs to free the major and prevent further destruction of the Warburton crockery, and Mr. Traubmann was presently going through the contents of Guy’s pocketbook.

But even as he began to finger the cards and memoranda of various sorts, the owner was stricken by the recollection that he had stuffed the paper into the pocket of another coat which was now hanging in the closet at home.

“ Never mind,” he said ; “ you won’t find it.”

“ Aha, I thought so,” muttered Traubmann, and

at the same instant "Augusta" returned with the announcement: "Dere's no ladies here. I been de house all over."

No ladies there! Guy could not understand it. What had become of Mrs. Westmore and Amy? Without them he had no one to substantiate his claim that he had entered the Warburton house on legitimate business. He had already shown the Kenworthy & Clarke permit, but Mr. Traubmann had easily persuaded Max that this went for nothing, as any one expressing a desire to see the house could obtain one.

But to the fact of his own predicament Guy gave at present but little heed. His mind was wholly occupied with the problem of the whereabouts of the two ladies. Could any evil have befallen them? Possibly Major Warburton might have broken his way out and——

Guy dared not follow this thought, but turned anxiously to Mr. Traubmann with the question:

"Do you suppose that madman can have got away from his keeper, the fellow you call Max?"

At the suggestion of such a possibility, both the shoe dealer and his spouse turned pale, and without vouchsafing a reply beat a precipitate retreat upstairs.

Guy tugged at his bonds in the effort to follow them, but he could not free himself and was fain to wait with all the patience he could muster for the return of Max.

The minutes passed and no one came. All was quiet above.

"They must have forgotten me," was Guy's conclusion when the kitchen clock had ticked off an hour of this dreary waiting. "I'm going to see what effect a few calls from a healthy pair of lungs will produce."

Thereupon the prisoner in the kitchen set up a series of yells, learned at Fairlock, that might have led a passer-by to infer that the lunatic of the mansion was confined in the basement.

A feminine shriek, emitted from somewhere close at hand, apprised Guy that some one, at any rate, had heard him, and three minutes later Max rushed in, followed rather timorously by a string of maid servants.

"What do you mean by raising such a row?" demanded the major's keeper sternly, hastily inspecting Guy's bonds, to make sure that there was no danger of his breaking loose.

"What do you mean by keeping me tied up here?" retorted Guy with spirit. "I've borne the thing meekly long enough. It's a disgrace. Mr. Kenworthy will let your employer know of the affair."

"Dat for your Mr. Kenworthy!" exclaimed Max, with a snap of the finger. "You can do all your talking to Mr. Scriber, de magistrate. Here's de constable now."

Matters were indeed growing serious for poor Guy. Was it possible that he must spend a night in jail till some one could come up from the office and identify him? Where could Mrs. Westmore be?

"Well, where's the burglar?"

This from a short, thick-set man, who had just

descended the stairs, clinking a pair of handcuffs suggestively.

Guy winced at sight of the latter. This was monstrous that he should be subjected to such indignities. Was Mr. Traubmann responsible for it all, he wondered?

Meantime Max had laid his hand on Guy's shoulder as indicating "the burglar," and the constable advanced with handcuffs open, when a new actor appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XXXII.

EXPLANATIONS AND A CALL.

THE newcomer was none other than Mrs. Westmore.

"Oh, Mr. Hammersley—Guy!" she gasped, at sight of the boy lashed about with the clothes line.

"What does this mean?"

Max started when he heard the familiar way in which this refined looking lady addressed the captive.

"It means," replied Guy, "that I am accused of entering this house with burglarious intent. You can tell them, Mrs. Westmore, to the contrary."

"Certainly I can. Release him instantly," and the lady spoke in such a tone of authority that Max never waited to put any questions, but proceeded to unbind Guy forthwith.

The poor fellow's limbs were quite stiff from his hour's confinement, and he was forced to sink into a chair for a moment after he was freed.

"It is shameful," declared Mrs. Westmore; then a sudden light breaking in upon her, "Why, it is my fault partly, I do believe," she added hastily. "If I had been here, to put in my evidence before, you might have been spared all this. But Amy, as soon as she saw people downstairs, begged me to flee

with her. We thought we should find you down here, but saw no one. The door was open though, and poor Amy was so terrified and eager to be out of the house, and off the place that I was obliged to go with her, without waiting to find out where you were. I am so sorry."

"Oh, it's all right," returned Guy, rising. "Do you think we shall have time to catch the train we wanted?"

"Yes, the carriage is at the door, and Amy is waiting at the station."

As Guy turned to follow Mrs. Westmore upstairs, Max stepped up to him, and in very humble tones begged that he would not report the morning's proceedings. But Guy would not promise. He felt that a season of fear and trembling would be a good thing for the delinquent.

"Why do you suppose they permitted us to go to the house that contained such a skeleton in its closet?" said Mrs. Westmore, as they drove back to the village.

"We knew nothing about it," returned Guy, speaking for Kenworthy & Clarke. "And evidently our driver did not. I suppose the Warburtons did not want to acknowledge that the old gentleman was a fit subject for the asylum, so allowed him to remain in that room, as they thought, properly guarded. But this wedding evidently tempted the whole force of servants to take an hour off, and in that time the mischief was done."

Amy was still in a highly excited state, so nothing was said to her about the sequel to the morning's ad-

venture. In fact, during the journey back to town no reference whatever was made to the Warburton place.

But just as they parted at the Forty-Second Street station, Mrs. Westmore drew Guy aside and said in a hurried undertone: "We owe the demented old major one thing, at any rate: the discovery of a relative. Ridley will be around to see you immediately, and I want you to consider our house your home, and remember I am no longer Mrs. Westmore, but your 'Cousin Anna.'"

Guy made up his mind that he would say nothing at home, for the present, at least, about his adventure in the country. Indeed, there was so much excitement over Harold's success that there was small opportunity to introduce a new theme.

The result of the boy's first rehearsal was satisfactory in the extreme, and Mr. English predicted a brilliant "first night." He himself accompanied Guy and Harold to Harlem for a personal interview with Mrs. Hammersley.

"May I use the boy's own name on the bills?" he asked in the course of the talk. "It is an eminently fitting one for such a purpose."

After a little hesitation, Mrs. Hammersley gave her consent to this, and the manager hurried off to send the order to the lithographer.

Ward began calling Harold, "Your Royal Highness" forthwith, and wanted to know if the free list at the Criterion was to be "absolutely suspended" during the engagement.

"And if I were you, Harry," he added, "I'd send

a special dispatch to Mrs. Burnett, asking if she won't substitute a cat for a dog in the second act. Then you could have Emperor's name starred with yours."

But the boy was so happy over his prospects that he did not in the least mind a little teasing. He gave the family a detailed account of his day's experiences at the theater, where everybody had been extremely kind to him, and not a few funny incidents had happened during the rehearsal.

The next morning's papers contained a paragraph announcing a grand production of "Fauntleroy" at the Criterion "with Master Glenn, a boy of unusual talent, and one who looks the part to perfection."

Again Guy left him at the theater on his way to the office, for there was still a good deal of work to be done in order that all should move smoothly on Monday.

Our hero was just putting away his things that afternoon, preparatory to calling for the boy, when a young fellow entered whom he at once recognized as Ridley Westmore.

"Is Mr. Guy Hammersley in?" he inquired.

"That is my name," rejoined Guy.

"What, you?" exclaimed the other impulsively, and Guy knew that he too remembered those two contrasted meetings on Fifth Avenue.

"Yes, and I can guess that you are Ridley Westmore," he said frankly.

"Your cousin, and awfully glad to make your acquaintance," returned the other cordially, extending his hand, quite recovered from his surprise. "That is," he added, "if you're willing to reckon cousins

three or four times removed. I'm not just sure which it is."

"I'd be glad to know you if you were fifty times removed or—no, I don't mean literally," he added, as Ridley began to laugh with the thought of the uncomplimentary interpretation that might be put upon the declaration.

This *faux pas* of Guy's broke all the remaining ice, and he was about to ask Westmore to be seated when he recollected that he himself was due at the theater inside of ten minutes.

"I'll have to keep up this removing dodge," said he, laughing, "by asking if you would mind walking along with me to the Criterion Theater instead of sitting down."

"Certainly I wouldn't; that's on my way up-town. Going after tickets, I suppose."

"No, I am going to get a small brother of mine. He's been there all day rehearsing."

"Small boy—Criterion—rehearsing! You don't mean to say your small brother is Harold Glenn, who's announced to open in 'Fauntleroy' next Monday?" and Ridley stopped stockstill in the doorway while he put the question.

"Well, he's my half-brother, and a mighty nice little chap he is, too," rejoined Guy. "Come along and I'll introduce you."

"I am in luck," ejaculated Ridley, as he started off, little imagining the part he was destined to play in the fortunes of the youthful star.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN UNLUCKY INVITATION TO DINE.

It was but a short distance from the office of Kenworthy & Clarke to the Criterion Theater, but on the way Ridley managed to find out a good deal about the small boy concerning whom all the newspapers were beginning to talk. For this young fellow, fresh from a region where theaters were few and far between, took a deep interest in matters dramatic, and, as he had said, counted himself fortunate to have fallen in with an opportunity to "go behind."

So absorbed were the two in their conversation that neither of them noticed a man who stood in the doorway of a hotel across the street, directly opposite the theater, and who was attentively regarding them. He disappeared inside as soon as he saw them turn in at the stage door, and a few minutes later a man wearing the same clothes, but with an altogether different face, passed out by the ladies' entrance of the hotel and hurried across the street to the theater.

This second man had a thick head of hair, and quite a long, brown beard, while the person who had been leaning against one of the front columns but a short time before was almost bald, and wore simply a mustache. He made his way at once to the stage

door, and on being challenged by the doorkeeper as to his business there, replied that he had been sent for by the gasman to examine one of the stage burners.

As there was no performance in progress, the doorman, after looking the visitor over for a moment, mumbled out a gruff leave to enter, which the stranger hastened to accept. But once inside, he paid no attention to gas pipe or burner, merely hastening to conceal himself behind a stack of scenery near a group standing talking not far from the passage leading to the entrance way.

And when he heard the following introduction made : "Mr. English, let me present my friend, Mr. Westmore," and, peering around the edge of the scene, saw Guy's companion shaking hands with a business-like looking man without an overcoat, he rubbed his hands with an air of extreme satisfaction.

"Westmore ! Odd name," he muttered. "Dressed pretty fine. Must be son of the oil king. Easy to get on *his* track. Ah, what's that he's saying to the kid ?"

Ridley had stepped to one side with Harold and Guy, and this is what the listener overheard : "I want you and your brother to come to dine with us to-morrow night."

The invitation was accepted, conditioned on Mrs. Hammersley being willing that Harold should go. And, as the boy would not be needed so long for rehearsal the next day, Ridley arranged to call for him at the theater at three in the afternoon, take him for a drive in the park, and be back at their home in

upper Madison Avenue by the time Guy arrived there after business hours.

"Suits me to a T," muttered the man behind the scenes, and forthwith took himself off, the others soon afterwards following his example.

Her boy's prospects seemed to have a salutary effect on Mrs. Hammersley's health, and it was hoped now that she would be well enough to attend the first performance on Monday. On learning that the Westmores were relatives of Guy's, she gladly consented to Harold's visiting there, and he was dressed accordingly when he went off with Guy the next morning.

Mr. Shepard met him as usual at the theater, and assisted Mr. English in coaching him for the part, and at one o'clock took him off with him to lunch. Young Westmore had promised to call for him at three, but at half-past two, just when his work for the day was over, the doorkeeper came in with a note for the boy star. It ran as follows :

"My DEAR HAROLD :

"It has turned out such a beautiful day that I have decided to take you for a longer drive. To gain time, we are to start from our stable on the West side, and, as my sister is going with us, I must escort her over. I send Edward, a groom of mine, to bring you up there. Sorry I could not come myself, but it will all go to make a more pleasant outing for you in the end.

"Truly yours,

"RIDLEY WESTMORE."

Telling Mr. English, who knew of his engagement with the Westmores, that Mr. Ridley had sent for him, Harold hurried into his overcoat and went out

into the little box-like arrangement annexed to the theater, covering the stage door.

Here he found a smooth-faced young man, very deferential in manner, waiting for him.

"Did you come from Mr. Westmore after me?" asked Harold.

"Yes, your honor," was the response, with a ducking of the body and a tweak of the forelock which protruded from a peaked cap such as jockeys wear, "if yer honor's the young gentleman what's goin' to play the lord of Fauntleroy in this here theayter."

"I'm the boy," laughed Harold, "and I'm ready to go now."

He added this last as a reminder that the groom hadn't been sent here by his master to peer in upon the stage fixings of the Criterion, which the fellow was now craning his neck in the endeavor to accomplish.

"Yer pardon, young sir," responded the emissary, turning quickly, and, putting out a not particularly clean hand, he essayed to take one of Harold's and literally lead the boy off.

But to this the latter objected, and, sticking a hand in either pocket of his overcoat, he announced that he could walk along by himself if the other would but show him the way. Edward seemed somewhat doubtful about acceding to this request, but a second look at the resolute expression on Harold's manly face decided the matter for him. They went off together, but there was two feet of pavement between them.

"Where is the stable?" asked Harold, as they approached Forty-Second Street.

"The what?" repeated the young man

"Why, the stable where Mr. Westmore keeps his horses, and where you're taking me?"

A strange look of dismay, of terror almost, came into Edward's face as he listened to this repetition of the boy's question. He knit his brows into a heavy frown and gazed wildly about as if expecting to find assistance for something that was troubling him, and then, unconsciously, Harold came to his aid by adding: "Is it near enough to walk?"

"No, we have ter take a car. Here comes one now. Hurry, or we won't catch it."

Nothing loath for a run, Harold put his legs in motion, and the two were soon aboard a car on the Forty-Second Street road, bound west. Edward produced two nickels wrapped in a scrap of newspaper and paid the fare with quite a lordly air, while Harold puzzled himself with the problem why Ridley Westmore, who was so well dressed himself, should have such a slovenly servant about the place.

At each avenue they crossed the boy thought they would get out, but his companion made no move. Presently the car stopped in front of a ferry-house, and Harold saw that this was the end of the route.

"Come, we must hurry," said Edward. "The boat's just going to start."

"The boat? Why, what are we going on the boat for?" Harold wanted to know. "Is the stable across the river?"

"No, but de kerridge is," explained Edward, draw-

ing a long breath and speaking rapidly. "The boss changed his mind after the note was writ—or no, de missy had gone across de riber, and he got a telygram to meet her wid de kerridge, an' he'll be dere when we git over. Then he's goin' ter take you a splendid drive among de hills."

While talking, Edward was making tracks for the ferry-house, and Harold was obliged perforce to follow him, as he was still a stranger in town and did not wish to be left alone.

Boy-like, he was much distracted by the sights of the river to be seen from the boat, and did not pay much heed to other things till they had reached the other side, and when, after being conducted by his guide through several streets in a squalid neighborhood, there were still no signs of Ridley.

"Are you sure you know where he's to be?" asked the boy.

"Yes, pretty sure ; we'll soon be there now," and cheered by this intelligence, Harold plodded bravely on till they finally reached the country.

The road was a lonely one, and at this point wound through a thick woods. And here, on suddenly turning a corner, they came upon a close carriage.

"Here we are," cried Edward, assisting Harold in.

There was only one man inside, and as the horse was started off at a fast trot, Harold recognized, not Ridley Westmore, but Colonel Starr.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHAT HAPPENED ACROSS THE RIVER.

"WHY, Colonel Starr, did Mr. Westmore send you after me?" exclaimed Harold, looking up in the colonel's face all unsuspiciously.

"No, my son, he did not," replied that individual solemnly, and he bent down and imprinted a kiss on the boy's forehead. "In this case I have been compelled to use a little deception in order that right may come out of wrong, and the cause of justice triumph."

"Why, what do you mean? I don't understand," exclaimed the boy, as much astonished by the kiss as he was mystified by the words.

The colonel had relinquished the lines to Edward, who, mounting to the front seat of the ramshackle old vehicle, was urging the horse onward as fast as the ancient animal could be induced to move. In fact, no turnout could have been in greater contrast to that which Harold had expected to find awaiting him.

"What do I mean, my dear boy?" answered the ex-concert company manager, who, with an arm about Harold, was holding him pressed tightly against his

side. "Prepare yourself for a shock, you poor child, who have been accustomed to so many of them. I am your father."

"You!" cried the boy, with all of amazement and nothing of joy in the exclamation. "Then your name oughtn't to be Colonel Starr, but Mr. Hammersley, like mamma's."

"Ah, but Mrs. Hammersley is not your mother, my child," and the colonel shook his head slowly from side to side as though he was personally deeply afflicted by this fact. "Of course you will not take this as hard as you would had you known her as a mother for a very long time."

"But how do you know? I don't believe it," said Harold bluntly. "Why didn't you find it out before, if it is so?"

"It was an old nurse we had once who told me about it only yesterday afternoon. She lay dying in a New York hospital and sent for me. She had charge of you when you were a little boy, and one day, when out walking with you, she reported that you were snatched from her arms by some evil looking men. All search for you was in vain. Your mother died from the shock, and my hair was prematurely whitened. Yesterday afternoon, as I say, this woman sent for me, and confessed that you had not been snatched away from her at all, but that she had sold you to a circus for \$25, representing herself as your mother. You had been so sickly that the circus people could not train you up to their business, so they accepted the offer of a kind-hearted lady in a Pennsylvania town where they were showing, who

offered to adopt you. This lady was none other than Mrs. Colburn."

"But why do I look so much like Mr. Glenn, then?" Harold wanted to know.

He was taking the revelation very calmly, considering the fact that he had never been over fond of Colonel Starr.

"Because he was my first cousin," answered the colonel boldly. He had evidently made up his mind to stop at nothing that would serve to make his story have the semblance of holding water.

"Why didn't you tell all this up there in Brilling?" Harold wanted to know.

"Because, as I have just told you, I didn't know anything about it till yesterday afternoon, when that nurse, Betty Springsteen, sent for me and made her confession."

"Why didn't you come for me yourself then," went on the boy, "and tell all my friends about it, instead of making a big deception like this? I don't think it was right or fair. What will Mr. Westmore say?"

"Your father is the first person to be considered," responded the colonel oracularly. "I foresaw that a great time would be made should I attempt to convince the Hammersleys of the mistake. My heart hungered to possess my boy. I am much better able to provide for you than is the widow, so you are far better off."

Poor Harold! His heart began to fail him at last. He had been through so many vicissitudes of parentage in his short life that he could not be sure but

that this man, who was so distasteful to him, was telling the truth. In that case, how could he give him the affection that would be his due? And then, to be wrenched away in this sudden manner from his home, his friends and the career that was just opening so auspiciously before him!

This last thought inspired him with renewed courage. He felt that he belonged not only to his friends but to the public. His appearance for Monday night had been already advertised, and thus great interests were depending on his remaining in New York.

"You must take me back at once, Colonel Starr," he began decidedly. "As long as you sent to the theater for me you must know that I've got an engagement there."

"Certainly I know," returned the colonel, "and that shall not be interfered with if you consent to remain quietly with me."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the boy. "If I stay with you how can I be at the theater?"

"By staying with me, I mean living with me," was the reply. "Of course it is to be expected that Mrs. Hammersley will make a great ado when she finds that you are gone, and try by hook or crook to get you back again."

"Hush; you shall not talk about my mamma that way," broke forth the boy, struggling to free himself from the arm that held him.

"She is not your mother now, but I am your father, and all your allegiance belongs to me," rejoined the colonel, emphasizing his assertion by a tightened grip upon the luckless lad.

"I don't believe it," retorted Harold stoutly. "If you would do so mean a thing as you have just done to get me to come out here, you wouldn't mind telling a story about the rest of it. If you won't take me home, stop the carriage and let me get out. I guess I can find my own way back."

"You shall not get out," said Colonel Starr between his teeth, and, bringing his other arm into service, he held the boy in such a firm clutch that the poor little fellow could not even wriggle.

Harold was now thoroughly frightened, and opening his mouth he gave vent to a piercing scream.

Edward turned around, and gave one look backward, and then continued urging on the sleepy old horse, while the colonel, instead of becoming angry and threatening the boy, stopped his mouth with another kiss.

"My dear little son," murmured he, "I know it comes hard to you at first to give up associations to which you have been accustomed. That is why I took this sudden method of effecting the change, and have brought you out to the quiet of the country in order that you may have a chance to get used to the new order of things."

"Where are we going?" asked Harold, after a pause, broken only by the sound of Edward's persistent chirrup to the lazy nag.

"To a house of mine not far from here. Then, when you are quieted down and reconciled to your new life, I will take you over to the theater and permit you to resume your rehearsals. But you must first **promise** me that you will be loyal to me and

claim me as your father. This, of course, I have a right to expect. And if I hear of your complaining to any one that I am not your father, and that I have taken you off against your will, you never go back to play the part of Fauntleroy again. Will you promise, Harold?"

The boy was silent, torn by conflicting emotions. He could not feel that this man was in any manner related to him, and yet, should he not admit the claim, he would be deprived of his great ambition—playing his rôle in Fauntleroy. That Colonel Starr would be able to carry out this threat the boy had not the slightest doubt. It would be a very simple matter to take him with him on some train and whisk him clear out West beyond any possible reach of his friends.

"Well, what do you say, Harold? Will you make that promise?"

The colonel was plainly becoming impatient. A little nervous, too, if one might judge from the fashion in which he looked out ahead over Edward's shoulder towards a house which could just be made out some distance down the road. Clearly he had expected to find Harold of a more pliable disposition than had turned out to be the case.

"Let me think over it awhile, Colonel Starr, won't you?" responded the boy, who had also been looking out ahead, and who had seen something with his sharp young eyes which the older ones of his seat-mate had failed to discover.

"What good will it do you to think it over?" responded the colonel. "You know as much about

the conditions now as you will five minutes hence."

It will be noted that Colonel Starr talked to the boy just as if the latter was a full grown man. This was doubtless owing to the fact that Harold, having already taken up a profession, had come to be regarded as much older than he really was.

"All right, in a minute," replied the boy, in a tone so different from that in which he had just spoken that the ex-concert company manager instinctively followed the direction of his eyes.

These were resting on a young man on a bicycle who was just passing the carriage.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WAR ON WHEELS.

BEFORE Colonel Starr could do anything to prevent it, Harold had given vent to a piercing cry, "Help! help!" To be sure the colonel at once clapped his hand over his mouth, but the mischief had been done.

"Hallo; what's up there, I wonder?" said the young wheelman to himself, and checking his speed, he dismounted with the intention of making an investigation.

But meanwhile the instigator of this bold abduction, holding poor Harold with one hand, had leaned over and grasped the lines from Edward with the other.

"Whip up, whip him up, I tell you!" he cried under his breath, and slashing the poor nag on the back with the reins, he tried to urge him into a gallop.

Edward obediently plied the whip, and surprised into a spurt, the horse left his jog trot for a few minutes, so that, when the bicyclist turned round he found the carriage quite a distance in the rear. But this fact only fired him with a greater desire to make his investigation.

"Here's a chance I've been wishing for ever since

I learned to ride," he muttered to himself, as, springing into the saddle, he started in pursuit of the vanishing vehicle.

Silently as an air ship the rubber-shod steed sped over the ground, and before Colonel Starr was aware that his flight was really a chase, the stranger was alongside.

"Hallo, hold on here!" he called out. "I want to speak to you."

"Don't answer him," the colonel warned Edward, still keeping his hand over Harold's mouth. "Drive faster."

This last, however, was something which could not be compassed, especially since the young wheelman had ridden up alongside of the horse and was calling out two "Whoas" for every one of Edward's "Get up there's."

This terribly exasperated Colonel Starr.

"Hi, there," he finally shouted. "What are you doing? Can't you see we're in a hurry? Look out, or we'll run you down."

But to this the cyclist paid no other attention than to slightly turn his head and call back, "I'm bound to see this thing through. There's something wrong inside there, so you might as well stop and explain first as last."

"Confound your impudence!" roared the colonel. "I'll have you arrested at the first town. What do you mean by obstructing travel on the public highway in this manner?"

The cyclist made no reply, merely spun ahead and straight across the road, right under the horse's nose,

crying, "Whoa there!" at the top of his lungs. Now as the beast was nearly blown from the effect of his spurt, this little act of heading off furnished him with all the excuse he wanted for stopping short, which he did with such suddenness that Edward was thrown forward on his knees with his chin on the dashboard.

The wheelman did not lose a second, but dismounting in a trice and letting his machine down on the ground, he rushed up to seize the horse by the bridle.

"Now then," he cried, "I want to know who you've got in there that gave that cry for help. Who's that boy that you're holding down, Mr. Fat One?"

There was a twinkle in the young man's eye as he added these last words, but there was no fooling about the tone in which he spoke. He was a tall, well-built fellow, dressed in regular cycling rig, and it was plain to be seen that Edward was already overawed by his appearance.

As for the colonel, he was terrible in his wrath. He could not do much himself, as one arm was fully occupied in keeping Harold quiet. But his voice was unencumbered, and he used some pretty strong language; that is, it was strong, if not pretty. It was all in the line of abuse of the man who dared to stop a traveler on a State highway in this unlawful manner.

"Get out of the way instantly," he thundered, "or I shall drive over you. Edward, go on," and finished up by chirruping loudly to the horse himself.

But with a young giant at his head and only a weak-minded hireling at the reins, the animal decided that he preferred to stand still.

"Now what are you doing to that boy?" demanded the wheelman. "Let him talk for himself."

"He is my son, and I have a right to do as I please with him," returned the colonel, finding that he would be compelled to give some explanation.

"Then why are you afraid to let him speak for himself?" returned the stranger promptly.

"I'm not," and removing his hand from Harold's mouth, the colonel bent down and whispered in the boy's ear, "Remember what I told you."

Harold hesitated for an instant. What if the colonel should turn out to be really his father? Besides if he spoke now and the young man with the bicycle did not succeed in wresting him from the clutches of his captor, his last state would certainly be worse than his first.

But it was only for an instant that the boy hesitated. Then came the thought of his mother, her failing health, and the realization that his disappearance might prove a shock from which she could scarcely rally.

"I will be brave," was the boy's decision, and instantly his clear voice rang out with the words:

"I am not his son. He is kidnapping me. My name is Harold Glenn, and——"

But at this point the colonel, noting the sudden gleam of recognition that came into the wheelman's eyes at the mention of this name, once more clapped his hand over the boy's mouth and forced him into the back part of the carriage, where he commanded Edward to stand guard over him.

"Oh, ho, I see it all now!" exclaimed the cyclist.

"You want the boy for what he can bring you in. What an item for the morning papers! Come, now, instantly set that young gentleman out on the road here, or I follow you till I get force enough to compel you to do it. Oh, no fear but what I can keep up with you. I am out for an afternoon's ride, with no particular destination, so I can just as well afford the time as not."

The colonel's only reply was a torrent of threats and another attempt to urge the horse on past the determined young man who stood holding his bridle. But the urgings no more moved the horse than did the abuse the man, and things were at this deadlock when a market wagon, loaded to the brim, and bound for the ferry, appeared on the scene.

On the seats were the farmer and his wife, and, as the colonel was the first to catch sight of them, he called out: "Hey, there, run your team over this young man's wheel, will you? He is trying to stop travel on the highway."

The cyclist turned like a flash.

"Don't you do it!" he cried. "But come and hold his horse while I go into that carriage and rescue a boy this man's trying to kidnap."

"Laws a massy, Ephraim, what be all this?" exclaimed the farmer's wife, as the heavy wagon was brought to a standstill.

"Don't know, Maria, but ef ye'll hold on ter the animals, I'm boun' ter fin' out," and, as he spoke, "Ephraim" climbed from his lofty perch, and with eyes agog walked over to the spot where the young bicyclist was standing.

"Here, hold this horse, and don't let him stir, no matter what the fellow in there says," commanded the man who had stopped travel, and, without giving the farmer opportunity to say whether he would or wouldn't, he sprang upon the shaft, and in another instant was grappling with the colonel.

"Now you scoot out the back—never mind tearing the curtains," he called out to Harold.

For the colonel had been obliged to call Edward to his aid, and, thus left free, Harold was not slow in availing himself of the opportunity for escape pointed out to him by his unexpected champion. Pressing against the rear curtain of the rickety vehicle with all his might, he worked himself down, feet foremost, the slimy canvas answering with a "sish sish" to the strain.

The next instant he was on the ground, and in obedience to the beckoning hand of the farmer's wife, made a dash for the clumsy vehicle and in a trice was seated on the lofty driver's perch.

As soon as the young wheelman became aware that his plan had been successful he adroitly extricated himself from the entwining arm of the colonel, who was as clumsy as he was big, sprang back to the ground, and calling to the farmer to leave the horse's head, administered a lusty slap on the hip to that much enduring animal which sent him off on another spurt.

"For the love o' mercy, what war all the trouble about;" inquired the old farmer, rubbing his chin, and gazing from the rescuing cyclist to the rescued boy as if he had been bewitched by one or the other

of them, he couldn't decide which. "I jess stepped down ter look into matters—didn't want ter take sides till I was sartain what one I ought to go in with, but somehow——"

"Never mind, squire," broke in the young man. "You did just the right thing, and you'll never regret it and I'll see that they spell your name right when they put it in the papers to-morrow morning."

"My name in the papers!" repeated the old man, looking more dazed than ever.

"Yes, yes," the other assured him. "But we haven't time to stop and explain matters now. I'll do that on the ferry-boat. Just you take that young gentleman along with you down to the river, and I'll see that our fat friend doesn't interfere again."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A FREQUENT CHANGING OF SUBJECT.

OUR friend, the cyclist who had championed Harold's cause, did not find it necessary to prevent Colonel Starr from interfering with the boy's journey to the ferry on the farm wagon. The colonel evidently considered that it would be the best for himself in the end to own up to being beaten, for he never turned his carriage around.

The farmer's horses were put to a trot, so that the wheelman could ride by the side of the wagon, and Harold told his story. It would be hard to say whether the worthy couple who had assisted in the rescue were more astounded at the boldness of the colonel's scheme for abduction than at the fact that such a small boy should be a "play actor."

The wheelman gave his name as Stanley Cross, and on reaching the New York side padlocked his machine and left it at the ferry-house while he went up-town with Harold.

"I'm ever so much obliged to you both," said the latter, in parting with farmer Ephraim and his wife, "and if you'd like to see me act I'll get Mr. English to send you tickets for the first matinee if you'll give me your address."

"Well, well, I do declare now," was all the old man could say; but he produced the stub of a lead pencil and wrote directions for sending the tickets that filled the entire back of an old envelope Cross handed him, for he was so fearful the letter would miscarry that he put down the county and township even.

It was by this time five o'clock, and almost dark.

"I wonder if mamma knows about it yet," remarked Harold soberly, as he and Cross descended the elevated stairs at Ninety-Third Street. "If she does, she must—why, there's Guy!"

And so it was, and Ridley Westmore and Arthur Shepard with him, all three with the most solemn visages. They were just about to cross the avenue to the down-town station when Harold saw them.

"Guy, Guy!" he called out, making a dash for the middle of the street. "Were you looking for me?"

All three of the young fellows started as though it had been Harold's wraith who had spoken. Then they pounced on the boy in a body, and for a while there was such a babel of questions and exclamations that there was no room for either answers or counter queries.

But at length Harold managed to make them understand that not himself but Mr. Stanley Cross was the hero of the day, whereupon the whole party right about faced and bore Mr. Cross off to the flat to receive the thanks of Mrs. Hammersley.

"Does she know?" asked Harold.

"Well, we didn't tell her you were lost," returned Guy. "We only let her suppose that you were

‘misaid.’ But what an audacious scheme of Starr’s that was! He counted on your being chicken-hearted, Harry, my boy, and that is where he slipped up. But what a ‘jolly scare,’ as Ward would say, the whole thing has given us! When I got to the Westmores’ at dinner time I found Ridley here fuming away, for he’d got it into his head that I must have sent for you, and the people at the theater in telling about it had got things mixed.”

“And didn’t you ever think that Mr. Starr—I just won’t call him ‘colonel’—had anything to do with it?” asked Harold.

“How should we? When I found you weren’t at the Westmores’, we posted down to the Jura to see Shepard about it, and it was he told us the note that took you away was supposed to have come from Ridley here.”

“And what did you do then?” Harold wanted to know.

“Betook ourselves to the Westmore stables as quickly as an engine could carry us, only to find out that nobody there knew anything about you. Then we came over home and were just bound, some of us for police headquarters, others to put a note in the papers, when we met you.”

Before they reached the flat Ridley and Cross discovered that they knew friends in common, and on opening the door of the cozy little apartment another surprise was found to be in waiting. This was Judge Dodge, who had come to call on Mrs. Hammersley, and whom Ruth was endeavoring to entertain without letting him know that Harold was missing.

"I should have felt so humiliated," she explained afterwards, "to have him think that we couldn't take care of the boy after we'd got him."

But there was no keeping the thing secret now, and a general jollification over the "lost found" was held in those little rooms. Besides, it was all out in the papers next morning exactly as Stanley Cross had predicted. Indeed, Guy more than suspected that that enterprising young gentleman had a hand in getting it there, as he was a Columbia Sophomore with a predilection for scribbling. And he was heard to remark moreover that the publication of the item would prove a first class advertisement for the new Fauntleroy.

Well, the first performance was a great success. Harold became the talk of the town, the Four Hundred "took him up," and the Hammersleys' modest flat formed the stopping place for many swell turn-outs, whose owners were only too rejoiced if the "little lord" would condescend to take a turn in the Park with them. And such an avalanche of requests for autographs came in that Ward suggested Harold should get a typewriter to save him from writer's cramp in supplying them.

Judge Dodge remained in the city, and twice attended the theater with Mrs. Hammersley, who soon became well enough to take Guy's place as Harold's dresser. Of course Harold's salary removed all cause of financial worriment from the minds of the members of the "assorted family," and the sight of the boy's glowing face as he placed the envelope containing it in his mother's lap was something long to be remembered.

Now that Mrs. Hammersley had recovered and no longer needed her ministrations, Ruth, through Dr. Pendleton's influence, secured three pupils for violin instruction, and by the first of February had saved up enough money to pay the passage back to England of herself and Ward. They were to sail on Washington's Birthday.

On Valentine's Day Ruth, chatting with Guy at the breakfast-table, remarked with a smile: "Mrs. Westmore called again yesterday afternoon. She seems to take it very much to heart that you won't come and live with them. She told Mrs. Hammersley that it was your loyalty to her that kept you here. 'Of course I understand, Mrs. Hammersley,' she said, 'just how he feels about it, for now that the Farleighs are going away, you would be here all alone with the boy.' And——" here Ruth stopped, colored a little, then went on hesitatingly: "I don't know whether I ought to tell you this or not. Or perhaps you have guessed it yourself."

"Guessed what?" exclaimed Guy, his curiosity thoroughly aroused.

"Well, perhaps you know already," returned Ruth, toying with the spoon in her coffee cup, "and in that case it would be—would be rather embarrassing for me to tell you. Really, now, haven't you any idea of what I mean?"

"Really, I shall begin to think terrible things of somebody unless you tell me plainly what all this is about."

"No, I won't tell it," rejoined Ruth. "I can't. But I'll tell you something else, from which you can

infer the other. When Mrs. Westmore said that about your wanting to stay here to keep your mother company, Mrs. Hammersley blushed and changed the conversation. Now do you see?"

"No, I don't," returned Guy bluntly; "and it's my opinion you're dodging the point at issue."

"Yes, that's just it," burst forth Ruth, with a nervous little laugh. "It's Judge Dodge."

Then Guy comprehended, and wondered why he had been so blind before.

It was even so. Their common interest in Harold had taught Judge Dodge and Mrs. Hammersley to have a common interest in one another, and very soon he who had been the boy's grandfather in name became his stepfather in reality. And at the close of the New York season Harold was withdrawn from the stage, and went to live again in that beautiful home in Brilling. The day of the marriage Guy took him to the Westmores' with him, where he remained during the wedding trip, and where Guy himself has now taken up his permanent residence.

Early in June he and Ridley drove out to Rye, as the latter was extremely anxious to see the place. They found that the major was dead, and that his son, the owner, had returned to America for a few weeks to see if he could not dispose of the property.

"Now I'm going to find out how that front door came to be locked after you had gone inside," said Ridley, when Guy had pointed out Max to him.

A few inquiries elicited the information that the German had become nervous at the wedding lest he had failed to lock the door behind him, and had come

back and tried it. Finding it open, and the key under the mat, where he always placed it, he concluded that he had done what he had suspected himself of doing, locked the door, and hurried back to the festivities.

Ridley was very enthusiastic about the beauties of the place, got his father on his side, thumped his brain till he thought of "View Point" as a new name, and then induced his mother and sister to put aside their prejudice and come up again and look at it. The result was a purchase—after Ridley had agreed to take the major's rooms for his own, with Guy to share them.

And here our hero spends his summers. His salary has already been twice raised at Kenworthy & Clarke's, where he and Arlington—who now shares Shepard's rooms at the Jura—are held in high regard. Guy is obliged to submit to a good deal of teasing from Bert on the score of Amy Westmore. His standard reply to these thrusts is, "But we are cousins."

"Three times removed though," laughs Bert, adding: "Three times and out, you know, which in your case, my boy, is sure to mean *in*—the toils of matrimony."

Whereupon Guy always changes the subject, as Mrs. Hammersley did before him.

THE END.

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